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TO

SIR RICHARD HILL, B^T. M. P.

SIR,

THIS Address is not intended to insult You with Adulation; but in an Age so depraved and dissipated as the present, it is a pleasure to be able to point out any man of Rank and Fortune, who is not ashamed of *Experimental Religion*, nor a disgrace to it.

That these Truths may continue to afford You, both living and dying, much consolation; and that your example may excite the emulation of many, is the ardent and sincere wish of

Your most obliged

humble Servant,

THE AUTHOR.

London, 10th October, 1795.

P R E F A C E.

I SHOULD be sorry to offer to the Public, a work which really needed an apology; and not less so, to trouble them with an apology when unnecessary. The *subject* of the following work appears to me of the first importance—the general *argument* conclusive and irrefragable—the *historic method* likely to interest the reader's attention—of the rest I can only say, time and attention have not been spared.

So far from deprecating *criticism*, I implore it. Every *good natured* critic is my friend: and should even malevolence induce an enemy to point out blemishes or errors, so that the work may be improved—"therein shall I rejoice: yea, and WILL rejoice."

The Argument is *historical*: it is contended for as a *fact*, that good men in all ages, in all countries, and of every denomination, have *felt* the reality of vital Godliness—have attributed their experience to the agency of the HOLY SPIRIT—and have functioned

tioned their testimony by *holy lives* and *triumphant deaths*. These witnesses are selected, not from among prophets, apostles, and divines *only*; but from among the most eminent characters in *every* walk of public and private life—in every branch of literature and science.

Whatever other defects may attend it, I please myself with the idea, that my collection is in one respect like *heaven* itself—it receives good men of *all* sects and parties, as well as of all ages and countries, without respect to any thing but their piety.

Happy should I be to hail the return of that *golden age*, when the followers of Christ were distinguished only by *his* name; and when all those who loved the Lord Jesus in sincerity, loved one another also.—Doubly happy should I be, if, by the blessing of God, this little work should in any degree contribute to its revival!

In the late exertions of different denominations to make a common cause of Christianity, and spread it throughout the world, I flatter myself may be traced some gleams of the dawning of such a day.—Glorious day! Angels and saints shall hail its rising!—And while we wait its appearance, “like those that watch.

watch for the morning," let us beguile our anxieties with a triumphant *requiem* over the funeral of that black and intolerant monster—BIGOTRY!

" Here lies—(and may it here for ever lie !)

" The carcase of dead piety :

" Shadow of grace, substantial sin,

" Religion's mask and gaudy dress,

" The form and foe of holiness,

" The image and the plague of zeal divine !

" Its dwelling was the church : in double shape,

" Half was a murd'ring wolf, and half a mimic ape.

.

" Shout at the grave, O traveller !

" Triumphant joys that reach the skies,

" Are here the justest obsequies :

" Shout thrice !—Then flee afar

" These poisonous steams and stench of the sepulchre :

" Go, turn thy face to Heav'n, and pray,

" That such a hateful monster never may

" Obtain a resurrection-day *."

AMEN !

T. W.

* *Watts's Miscell. Thoughts.*

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AN
HISTORIC DEFENCE
OF
EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

INTRODUCTION.

MAN is in nothing so eminently distinguished from the brute creation, as by religion. Some animals resemble the human form; others possess a sagacity very similar to reason; and several species of birds admirably imitate the accents of a human voice; but none of them differ over a capacity of religion:

“Religion the sole voucher, man is man.”

By renouncing religion, therefore, man degrades himself as near as possible to a level with the brutes; they should remember, however, that though they may divest themselves of almost every thing else that is human, they cannot put off their inner clay;

“Men may live brutes; but brutes they cannot die.”

YOUNG.

B

Put

But what is RELIGION?—If I were to define it, I should call it a DEVOTEDNESS of HEART to GOD. This is the *essence* of religion.—But in the present state of human nature, it is an indispensable and awful fact, that the heart is not *naturally* devoted to God. Religion, therefore implies something more; namely a WORK of GRACE upon the heart.—We may then add with the great Commissioner *Wheatley*, in exhortation, “There is but ONE TRUE RELIGION in the world, and that is the WORK of the SPIRIT of GOD in the HEARTS of men.”

The heart is the spring of ACTION.—Hence a devotedness of heart implies a constant obedience to the divine will—a practical regard to the precepts of morality—a respectful attention to parents and rulers—and a hearty acquiescence in the dispensations of salvation. To this end it is understood, that a comprehension of this matter has been so designed, as to be a mistake.—Some *young men* the one, and *young women* the other (as well as *young men and women*) have taken it for the whole, and have contented themselves, which, alas! has done more to retard than to advance, and has caused “*many a young man and woman*” to be “*lost*.”

It remains, then, to be explained, what is the *essence* of religion in the HEART; and what the *work of the Spirit of God*, includes the *operation*, *experience*, *fruits*, and evidences of it in a *young man and woman*.

This religion we call *evangelical* religion; and for the same reason that we apply the term to certain *doctrines*

of *experience*; namely, because it is not founded in speculation or conjecture, but on a real and sensible experience of divine things; called by the Psalmist, *testimonies and doings*, "that the Lord is good." Since the whole of this is considered in scripture as the work of the *spirit* of God, our subject becomes necessarily connected with the doctrine of DIVINE INTERFERENCE; and that again implies the doctrine of the FALL (commonly termed *original sin*) or the natural depravity of man, and his incapacity to recover himself to holiness, and to God.

The work of God's spirit is usually divided, or rather *dividedly*, into *inward* *graces*, which we may now enumerate, and *outward*, at the same time, to all four divisions of the foregoing remains all in this subject—*the inward* *graces* being that which is directed *inward* upon the heart, and *outward* graces, as *conversion*, *repentance*, or the *fulfilling* of the law.

REGENERATION, or the new-birth, is the communication of a new principle of spiritual life to the soul, whereby, as St. Peter expresses it, we are made partakers of A DIVINE NATURE.

CONVERSION, which supposes the former (since the mind is prior to action) is the turning from sin to God—*from Satan to God*.

REpentance, which supposes the former, is the turning from sin to God, and is distinguished from conversion, inasmuch as conversion is the turning from sin to God, and repentance is the turning from sin to God, and is distinguished from conversion, inasmuch as conversion is the turning from sin to God, and repentance is the turning from sin to God.

1. *Conversion* is the turning from sin to God, and is distinguished from repentance, inasmuch as conversion is the turning from sin to God, and repentance is the turning from sin to God.

B 2

REPENTANCE,

REPENTANCE, which is nearly the same, strictly signifies a *change of mind*, attended with a change of *conduct*. It is that disposition of heart when by "the wicked man turneth from his wickedness, and doeth that which is lawful and right."

FAITH is a confidence in the promise of divine mercy through Christ Jesus; or as a simple christian once admirably expressed it, "the taking God at his word."

This subject may, perhaps, be farther elucidated by considering faith in different respects.

Faith then may be distinguished as it is grounded, either on a divine or human testimony, and is therefore *divine* or *human*; *i.e.* rest either upon the word of God or man.

Faith may also be considered as having respect either to *facts* or *promises*. The belief of a fact is simply giving credit to the relation; the belief of a promise implies reliance and dependance. Suppose a man of good reputation assures me he hath distributed certain benefits to out in prison, I give him credit for his assertion; but if he promise to bestow the same benefits on me, and they are such an answer to my necessities, then I trust upon his word, and wait for its accomplishment. Apply this to God. The former is *historical faith*, and may be *dead*; the latter is *true, living, and enlarged faith*.

Some firm views of this subject have occasioned some anxiety in the doctrines of good and evil, which may puzzle novices in divinity; yet are perhaps no more

more really inconsistent than several views of the same country taken in different points of sight.

There is also some difficulty in arranging the two graces of faith and repentance. The scriptures commonly place repentance first; yet as “without faith it is impossible to please God,” it should seem that they must be twin sisters †. A *degree* of repentance seems, however, to precede faith in order of nature, if not of time. A sight of the evil of sin is necessary to make salvation desirable; but then a sight of Christ renders sin more odious. Repentance has therefore been beautifully called “a tear dropped from the eye of faith.”—“They shall look (saith the prophet) when they have pierced, and mourn†.” Repentance is not the work of a day only; it is a grace and a duty, which, as well as faith, pervades the whole of a Christian’s life: an increasing sense of sin and sin’s abhorring truth excite us for faith; and better views of Jesus Christ Redeemer, implying confidence in his power and merit, and contrition. Thus the graces necessarily advance each other; and oc-

† *John* 1. 12. *Whoever will receive him, shall receive him, and shall receive the fruit of his life.* *John* 1. 13. *Whoever will receive him, shall receive him, and shall receive the fruit of his life.*

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† *John* 1. 12. *Whoever will receive him, shall receive him, and shall receive the fruit of his life.* *John* 1. 13. *Whoever will receive him, shall receive him, and shall receive the fruit of his life.*

cation a variety in the believer's experience (not unlike the alternate succession of showers and sunshine in the spring).

“ Just such is the christian : his race he begins,
 “ Like the sun in a mist, while he mourns for his sins,
 “ And melts into tears : then he breaks out and shines,
 “ And travels on his heavenly way &c.”

SANCTIFICATION is the gradual purification of the heart and life. It is the continuation of that great work of the SPIRIT, which is begun in regeneration and completed at death.

ILLUMINATION of the mind is another branch of this work, which places spiritual objects in a new light; and is as necessary to the proper discovery of such objects as the solar beams are to the discernment of external things.

COMMUNION with God implies two things—a communication of divine graces from him, and a return of devout affections to him. This communion is a privilege at all times desirable, but most especially in the exercise of religious duties.

CONSOLATION is a general term, including the various comforts and joys which believers derive from an application of the divine promises, by the Holy Spirit, under all their various trials and afflictions.

ASSURANCE is a persuasion, either of our *right* to an interest in the benefits of the gospel by the tenor of its promises, or of our *actual* personal interest

* WALKER.

in

In these blessings. The one has respect chiefly to God's word; the other, to our own feelings. The former has been distinguished by some persons as the assurance of faith, and the latter, that of sense: but both are commonly included under the general term—*assurance*.

I shall close this Introduction with two or three remarks.

1. I observe an essential connexion, a mutual relation, and a kind of perfection, in the work of grace. It is “a new creation,” and, like the new-born infant, possesses all its parts at once, though but in miniature; and time is requisite for their growth before many of the members can be used. Although we come into the world with eyes, and hands, and feet; these do not all come into use immediately, or at once, but require different degrees of maturity to enable us to observe—to handle—to and to walk. So it is with the new creature: every grace indeed is formed at once; but cannot be brought into immediate use. It is by a gradation of experience, and by repeated exercise, that our graces are matured. Every converted soul has faith, repentance, and some degree of illumination and sanctification: but to live in the constant exercise of these graces—to enjoy daily comfortable communion with God—to attain considerable knowledge of the different mysteries of the gospel, and to grow more and more into the image of God's holiness, are great attainments, and mark the perfection of the christian character.

2. Though

2. Though the work of grace is *essentially* the same in every subject, and wrought by the same power; yet there is the like *variety* in this as in all the other works of God. Human artists often affect uniformity; but variety is the glory of the divine architect. There are not perhaps in all the earth, two animals, two plants, two grains of sand, perfectly alike. So in the visible heavens there is the like diversity. “One star differeth from another star in glory *.” The varieties in a work of grace arise, either from a difference of natural disposition, situation, or circumstances; or from the various methods which the Lord the Spirit, (who acts as a sovereign) useth in conversion; “There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all †.”

One thing is particularly observable—that much depends upon the order and degree in which divine illumination is communicated to us. To some the Lord gives an earlier and stronger conviction of their sin and danger, whilst the glory of the Saviour is, for wise reasons, withheld from them. To others the Lord makes an immediate and full discovery of the gospel salvation, which prevents their suffering the same degree of distress with the former.

3. I observe that some things are represented as wholly wrought *by* us, some *for* us—and yet others, in different respects, are represented *both* as God's work and our duty. To illustrate—in regeneration we are wholly passive—in good works, properly active,

* 1 Cor. xv. 41.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 6.

but faith and repentance are both God's gifts, and our duties. The fact is, these *capacities* are wholly from God; but we are required to *use* them. So in natural things—God gives us eyes to see, and hands to work; therefore seeing and working are both duties.

4. Though I have endeavoured to explain these things with the utmost clearness and simplicity, I freely confess my fears, that to many readers what I here advance I will be equally unintelligible with a discourse on light and colours to a person born blind. Yet did I know such a man, and also a person capable of infallibly curing him, I should think it my duty to convince my blind acquaintance, that there was a desirable something which I call *Light*, in order to excite him to apply for such relief. With this view I address the spiritually blind—may that gracious Saviour, who alone is able, work *that* miracle of mercy for my unenlightened reader!

5. Should it be objected that my definitions are rather popular than metaphysical, I admit it; such also are those which the scriptures employ, and such I conceive most generally intelligible. That they may not be perfectly adequate to the subjects is more than possible; for “eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived,” the full extent or the blessings of grace, or more than the full glory.

6. I deliberately pass over several things not essential to my end. For this reason, I find it avoid (as much as may be) the disputes of the schools respecting

grace; and also, all creatures into the Duty or Personality of the Holy Spirit: the former have been fully and thoroughly described by others. I need not assure, that the Subjects of these Discourses are not to advance his glory and his honour; and that no man can truly act and be guided by the Holy Spirit, will speak dishonourably of him, or lightly of his work.

One thing more is however of importance to be observed—that when we treat of the Holy Spirit in the subsequent pages, we rather intend his communicable influences, than his incommunicable essence—*i. e.* it is not the Duty itself, but his *gracious Influences* that we immediately intend.

CHAP. I.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST TO THE VARIOUS BRANCHES OF EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION.

I will not so much offend my readers as to question the consistency—for I suppose that very few, even on the supposition the least attention paid to its declarations and precepts would willingly give up the Christian religion. Nor, even those who adhere to the scriptures, and profess the authority of their author, would yet be thought to have lost the necessary reverence for Jesus Christ and his apostles—I cannot account for this inconsistency, but I will not attempt it; but only take occasion from the opportunity which is sufficiently numerous, to address myself to the understanding and reason with them on their own grounds.

When we consider JESUS CHRIST as a prophet, or as a messenger, or merely as a prophet sent from God, or as a messenger from God, we are bound to receive his testimony as we receive that of all, as *infallible*; since we are bound to believe that he received his authority from God himself, and that his words were the words of God, but the words of the Father who sent him. Therefore, though in a much of our Religious discourses it is not so on the dignity or his person as given, and every man's challenger gives weight

and importance to his message; so the more exalted notions we entertain of the person and character of Jesus, with the greater respect and attention shall we be induced to receive his sublime discourses.

We shall begin our Lord's testimony with his remarkable conversation with Nicodemus, on the subject of REGENERATION, which is the first branch of experimental religion.

"There was a man of the pharisees (says the sacred historian *) named Nicodemus, a ruler [or magistrate] of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be BORN AGAIN he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be BORN AGAIN. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and [rather *use*] whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

* John 3. 1—8.

This discourse suggests and answers two enquiries very important to our subject, namely, the NATURE of this new-birth—and the CAUSE or AUTHOR of it.

As to the first, it is evident from the very term, “born again,” that it cannot intend a natural birth: and it is equally clear, from the connexion of the discourse, that it refers not to adoption, education, baptism, or any thing merely human or natural.—For, saith the Evangelist of these persons, they were born, —“not of blood,” by natural generation; “nor of the will of the flesh,” by any effort of human power or skill; “nor of the will of man,” as in the case of human adoption; “but of God &c.”

Baptism with water cannot be intended, because distinguished from it‡; this indeed may be called a being “born of water,” but the new birth our Lord insists upon is, a being “born of the SPIRIT.”

* See the words of the apostle, *John* 1. 12. “Whosoever receiveth him, shall receive life everlasting.” *John* 3. 15. “Whoever believeth in him, shall not perish.”

† *John* 1. 12.

‡ *1 Peter* 3. 21.

It is not to be understood, that the Spirit, by whom we are born again, is a person, distinct from the Father and the Son, as the doctrine of the Trinity is commonly understood. Mark ix. 37. *John* vi. 27. *Psalm* 139. 7.

Some have also taken exception to the phrase, “born of the Spirit,” as if it implied, that the Spirit, by whom we are born again, is a person, distinct from the Father and the Son, as the doctrine of the Trinity is commonly understood. Mark ix. 37. *John* vi. 27. *Psalm* 139. 7.

* *John* 1. 12. “Whosoever receiveth him, shall receive life everlasting.” *John* 3. 15. “Whoever believeth in him, shall not perish.”

It deserves also to be considered, that to make this ordinance necessary to salvation, is to shut the gates of Heaven against all unbaptized infants; and that for an omission, for which they cannot be supposed accountable. And farther, to make any external rite the grand essential of christianity, is to contradict the very design of the Gospel; which is, to draw men from a dependance on rites and ceremonies (which formed the body of the Jewish religion and Gentile superstition,) and to raise their attention to spiritual and divine objects.

Neither will any change of sentiments, profession, or external conduct, sufficiently explain the idea. For a man to change his sentiments or reform his conduct, implies nothing sublime or mysterious; nor could it be so unintelligible to the Jewish ruler; and indeed it has been very justly remarked, that if our Lord by regeneration only intended a reformation of life, "instead of making a new discovery, he has only thrown a great deal of obscurity on what was before plain and obvious—not only to the Jews, but the wiser Heathens*." Neither must it be pretended by the advocates of this opinion, that the influences of the Spirit of God are necessary to any such external reformation of manners, which indeed is the duty of all men, but not so regeneration.

Perfectly agreeable to this discourse are the repeated assertions of our Lord, that men must "be converted and become as little children," in order to

* Dr. J. Owen, on the Spirit, p. 175,

be admitted subjects of his kingdom * ; but that this sense of the passage is opposed and endeavoured to be evaded, is no wonder, since it was so mysterious and incomprehensible to the Jewish ruler, and ever will be to all, however learned and ingenious, who are not acquainted with it from experience : For as “ the wind bloweth where it listeth,” and we know not “ whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth ;” so impossible is it, on principles of natural reason and philosophy, to account for the secret, powerful and sovereign influences of God’s Spirit.

In our Lord’s discourse with the woman of Samaria, soon after that with Nicodemus, he assures us, that they who worship God acceptably, must worship him “ in Spirit and in truth †,” i. e. in a sincere and spiritual manner, in opposition to the hypocritical and ceremonial worship of the Jews, and the blind and carnal services of the Samaritans.

In the same conversation Jesus Christ speaks expressly of the doctrine of divine influences, under the similitude of “ living waters,” yea, “ of a well of living waters springing up unto everlasting life ‡.” That this was spoken of the Holy Spirit, appears from our Lord’s frequent use of the same images elsewhere, and particularly in a subsequent chapter §, where we are told, that on the “ last day of the feast” of tabernacles, when the Priests used to draw water from the fountain of Siloam, in order, as some Rab-

* Matt. xviii. 3. — Mark x. 15, &c. † John iv. 23.

‡ John iv. 14. — § John vii. 37—9.

bins affirm, to invoke the effusion of the Holy Spirit * —Then Jesus stood and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said (in different places) out of his belly,” or from within him, as water out of the bellies of the fered vases, “shall flow rivers of living water.” “This (says the evangelical historian) spake he of the SPIRIT, which they that believe on him should receive.” We must not omit to observe, that though our Lord evidently refers to the extraordinary effusion of the Holy Ghost after his ascension; yet it cannot be confined to miraculous gifts, since we can hardly say, in any sense, that these “spring up unto everlasting life.”

In the sermon on the Mount, this same divine teacher pronounces a blessing on “the pure in heart †,” and in the parable of the sower, speaks of “an honest and good heart §,” in which his word is received, and becomes fruitful; but this implies a change of heart analogous to that of regeneration, since we are told, from the same divine authority, that the heart of man is naturally the seat of every evil principle, “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies †.”

In another of our Lord’s discourses with the Jews, he tells them,—“No man can come to me, except

* See Lightfoot, *Ille Hic*, p. 1. c. Also Dr. W. Watson, *Life of the Omnipotence of the Son of God*, p. 28.

† *Mat.* v. 8. § *Luke* xiii. 15. ‡ *Mat.* xvi. 17.

the Father which hath sent me draw him, and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets, they shall be all taught of God *. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me †.”

The first observation of the drawing and teaching here mentioned, is, that it is necessarily connected with faith and salvation, “he cometh unto me, and I will raise him up at the last day;” to interpret the expressions therefore of the preaching of the Gospel, as some have done, is to make our Lord assert, that all who hear the Gospel believe it, and shall be finally saved, than which, unhappily, nothing can be more false. This teaching is farther explained in a subsequent verse of a divine communication from the Father,—Jesus said unto the Jews †, “There are some of you that believe not——Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.” Where coming is explained of believing, and this faith expressly said (as by the Apostle) to be the gift of God.

A farther observation to our purpose is, that this had been before predicted by the holy Prophets, as it is written, “They shall be all taught of God,” every man therefore that hath heard and learned from the Father, cometh unto me,” i. e. as Dr. *Doddridge*

* The word (μαθηται) properly signifies they shall be the disciples or scholars of God. Dodd. Fam. Expof. i. 506.

† John vi. 44, 45.

‡ John vi. 64, 65.

expresses it, by virtue of these internal and efficacious teachings of his grace * : and if it appears when we come to examine the doctrine of the Prophets, under a subsequent chapter, that this was their meaning, it will greatly corroborate the exposition here offered.

But the most important and express of all our Lord's discourses on the doctrine of divine influences, is in his conversation with his disciples before his sufferings, wherein he promises, on his departure, to send them "another comforter, even the Spirit of Truth †." In these promises, it is readily acknowledged that, he refers to the miraculous powers conferred on the Apostles and first Disciples, at and soon after the day of Pentecost; but that these promises were to have a further and different influence, appears no less clearly from the following circumstances.

1st. From the office of the Spirit, as "the Comforter"; which cannot justly be confined to his miraculous interpositions, though being neither evidence for, nor defence for, the demerits of the divine favour, nor carriers of future blessings, and therefore could afford no proper consolation. And though we admit that the miracles wrought by the Apostles, as they were consequences of the Spirit's mission, were sufficient proofs of the innocence of

* 1st John i. 3. 2nd John 1. 8. 3rd John 1. 10.

† It is not necessary to suppose that these words were literally intended, as implying a new heart, or a new will, to be formed.

‡ John xiv. 26. 2nd John 1. 11.

§ John xiv. 26.

Jesus, of the sin of his crucifier, and of the certainty of a future judgment; yet it is but too evident, that, without some more immediate and effectual influence on the minds of men, there is little hope of their conversion: for,

2dly. "The world cannot receive the Spirit of Truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him;" which imports no other than the apostolic doctrine, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and perfectly agrees with other of our Lord's discourses already cited.

3dly. The Spirit is promised to abide with them "for ever;" which cannot truly be referred to his extraordinary and miraculous influences, which were only temporary, and lasted not in any degree, but for two or three centuries to the most, until the Gospel obtained a permanent establishment in the world.

I know that the phrase "for ever" may in some places admit of a very restrained sense; and it is possible that some may here wish to restrict it: But not to say how cold and flat such a version reads, [he shall abide with you for a while!] it totally enervates the argument our Lord used to comfort his disciples.

"I go away, says he, but, when I am gone, I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, not to remain with you a few years, as I have done, but perpetually and for ever." Upon this circumstance the force of the argument rests.

* Verse 17.

† John vi. 44, 45.

‡ Verse 16.

Indeed, while human infirmity remains the same, and good men continue exposed to the like temptations, there can be no less need of the Spirit's influences; but the best corroboration of this interpretation may, perhaps, be the proof that will be adduced from facts, that those communications are continued to the present day.

4thly. The particular ends for which the Spirit is promised, are such as were not peculiar to the first disciples. They are—to “lead into all truth,” or rather, “all THE truth;” i. e. all evangelic truth, says Bishop Lowth, to glorify Christ in their view, and to comfort them under the sufferings of persecution and affliction:—None of which reasons are peculiar to the times of primitive christianity.

5thly. In other passages our Lord encourages all men to implore the gift of the Holy Spirit, with a promise of bestowing this blessing on all who truly seek it. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him †!” It is to be observed, that our Lord had in his preceding discourses encouraged his disciples to seek the best blessings, with the fullest assurance of success.—“Seek, and ye shall find,” &c. This he enforces with a reference to God's paternal character. If human parents, whose affection is partial, and often defective, will give such things as their children de-

* Εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀληθείαν. John xvi. 13, &c.

† Luke xi. 13.

and, knowing them to be for their good, how much more will he give *that* good thing, that best of blessings, his Holy Spirit, to them that properly request it!—This seems to be the just sense and emphasis of the passage; and it appears to require no finding ingenuity to twist it to any other.

6thly. In the course of this conversation our Lord gives [ch. xv.] a most beautiful illustration of experimental religion, and vital union with him, by comparing himself to a *vine*, of which his disciples are *branches*. This discourse happened, as I conceive, while Jesus was walking from the supper chamber to Gethsemane—between the city and the brook Kedron †, where probably were many surrounding vineyards;—and, as it was now the 2d of April ‡, when the vines in Judea are pretty forward, and the full moon, his disciples might, perhaps, admire the plantations as they passed along. Jesus, ever ready to divert their minds from natural to spiritual objects, improves the subject; and, in strict conformity to the imagery of the Jewish prophets, compares himself to a vine.—“I am the true vine—you the branches—my Father the husbandman. As branches are engrafted in the vine §, so

It can not.

are ye by discipleship in me *. As the successful graft unites its sap with the stock, and abiding in the vine, brings forth fruit : So my true disciples being united to me by divine grace, derive from me spiritual life, and bear the fruits of a holy conversation. But those who follow me by a barren profession only, are like that graft which, never properly uniting with the stock, withers, and becomes a dry stick, fit only for the fire. The living branches must be pruned, indeed, to continue and improve their bearing ; but dead ones gathered for the flames." Such I suppose to be the import of this similitude : and the grand truth intended to be inculcated is, that all our spiritual life and holiness depends on Christ—"Without (or separate from †) me, ye can do nothing."

To sum up our Lord's evidence in a few words—he asserts the awful depravity and imbecillity of human nature—The consequent necessity of regeneration by the grace and Spirit of God—and his agency in carrying on and completing the work of personal salvation : ---he graciously promises that Spirit for those very ends---not to a few Apostles and Evangelists only ; but to all that diligently seek it---not to abide with them for a short time, and for temporary purposes, but for ever.—Who then is there who calls Jesus Lord, and as such adores him---who esteems him the prophet of the highest, and calls himself his disci-

* See Rom. xi. 17, 19.

† D. H. Zeph. iv.

ple---or, who only acknowledges the Son of God to be a wise and good man--who can deny, or even question, the reality of Experimental Religion, or the necessity of divine influences thereunto?

But though Jesus Christ taught all the great truths of Experimental Religion, in the most clear and forcible manner, yet can we not properly educe himself as an instance or example of it. Not being a sinner, he could not be the subject of regenerating grace. And though he possessed the Spirit without measure, and was doubtless thereby strengthened and assisted in his sacred devotions (as we may conceive angels and saints in glory to be) yet could he not be the subject of those sanctifying influences which are communicated to his people; because innocent and undepraved.

CHAP. II.

WITNESSES UNDER THE PATRIARCHAL DISPENSATION.

HAVING given the testimony of Jesus Christ that preference and distinction it demands, we proceed to other evidence, and that of an *experimental* kind, which shall be introduced as nearly in chronological order as circumstances will admit. For this purpose, let us turn back the leaves of the sacred volume, and enquire for the saints of ancient times.

Encompassed with so "great a cloud of witnesses," where shall we begin? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Paul, as I believe) will greatly assist us, by having drawn up a list of Old Testament worthies, to which we shall adhere, with some few exceptions and additions.

The Apostle prefaces his catalogue of believers with a comprehensive definition of faith, which the reader may, if he pleases, compare with the hints offered on that subject above*. He says, according to our version—"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen!" But the original is too full to be wholly comprised in a

* See p. 4.

excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh *."

The larger account which Moses gives of these two brothers, is well known and need not be recited. The reason of the respect paid to Abel's sacrifice, in preference to Cain's, is here clearly accounted for; it was offered in faith, while that of the other was not; and "without faith it is impossible to please God." There is a voice, therefore, in the faith and sacrifice of Abel, as well as in his blood; and if it be true that "actions speak louder than words," our attention to them may compensate the want of a fuller narrative.

Behold then, the pious Abel with his sacrifice!—Conscious of guilt, and sensible that without shedding of blood there is no remission †, he pours out its life at the foot of the altar. Can any thing speak more explicitly than this action, the language of a true penitent—"God be merciful to me a sinner!—I confess my guilt and depravity—acknowledge my inability to make atonement—fly for refuge to thine own institution, and look through this to the great sacrifice thou hast promised for human transgression!"

But see his elder brother!—with what an haughty air he brings his offering!—"God, I thank thee, (is his language)—I am not like other men—not the miserable sinner which that poor wretch confesses himself to be."—Here, we may behold the

* Heb. xi. 4.

† Heb. ix. 22.

just emblem of all self-righteous Pharisees !—they have *gone in the way of CAIN* ;” they have “ trusted in themselves that they are righteous,” and rejected God’s salvation.

Ah Cain ! “ Why art thou wroth ? and why is thy countenance fallen ?—If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted.” If thy works are perfect, shalt thou not be justified ?—and if not—“ A SIN-OFFERING layeth at the door ;” thou knowest the appointed sacrifice ;—there is the same atonement, the same mercy, for every self-convicted sinner.—Alas ! “ when the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil”—warning and counsels are in vain !

But we must return to Abel, who did well and was accepted. Good fruits indicate a good tree, and good works must spring from a renewed heart. So Christians are “ created *anew* unto good works ;” and thus we infer that Abel was a subject of regenerating grace.

Again, the great searcher of hearts has distinguished the proto-martyr by the epithet of *righteous* Abel : “ now as by nature there are none righteous, no not one”—nor can any be made so, but by God imputing or imparting righteousness unto them : we, therefore, conclude that Abel was “ sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus [the promised Messiah] and by the Spirit of our God §.”

* Job. 31. † Gen. iv. 7. See Dr. Keble’s Ser. P. 1. 216.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 35. § 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Once more.—Abel sacrificed by faith—“faith is the gift of God *,”—the work of God’s Spirit †, therefore Abel’s religion had the same origin as ours.

I would here also remark that the New Testament writers speak of the religion of the patriarchs, in what may be called *Christian* terms. In particular, St. Peter affirms that Christ by his Spirit, preached to the inhabitants of the old world ‡: and when God declared that his Spirit should “not always strive with man §,” in whatever sense that expression is to be taken, it must imply an agency of the Spirit on the hearts of men, analogous to what we have represented.

These texts and circumstances laid together, contain, I hope, sufficient evidence, not only of Abel’s piety (which nobody disputes) but also that his piety was not the work of the flesh, but of the Spirit of that God, from whom every good and perfect gift descendeth.

As we proceed farther, and our materials enlarge, the reader will have a right to expect more and clearer evidence, and it will be the author’s endeavour not to disappoint him. The light of revelation, like that of the sun, “shines more and more unto the perfect day.”

* Eph. ii. 8. † Col. iii. 12 ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 19. § Gen. vi. 3

E N O C H.

Born B. C. 3382.—Translated 3017.

This is the next character on our apostle's roll. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This testimony is recorded by Moses under the terms "he WALKED with God;" the Septuagint simply renders it, "he PLEASSED God;" which the apostle (as in many other cases) receives as insufficiently exegetical of the metaphorical expression, though not so comprehensive: for the term "walking with God," I conceive includes, 1. *Reconciliation to him*,—"Can we walk together, (saith the prophet) except they be agreed?"—certainly not, with any degree of pleasure and satisfaction. 2. *Intelligence of God*: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and he will be at peace;" was the advice of Euphrates, the Chaldean; one of Job's friends. 3. *Intercourse and communion*, like that of a man with his confidant; for Abraham was the friend of God; the angels walked with God, and the Lord conversed with them; "Face to face (or rather mouth to mouth)"—as he conversed with his friend J.

Walkers with God then, holds every branch of

* Genesis iii. 3.

† Job xxi. 14.

‡ Job xiii. 7.

§ Job xli. 11.

experimental religion; and not only so, but the making a *progress* in it. The original term properly implies a steady progressive course—thus the voice of the Lord (the thunder) walked in the garden of Eden *—thus the trumpet of Sinai walked (as the Hebrew phrase is †)—it appeared to come nearer and nearer, as the sound increased.

The same phrase of walking with God is applied to David, and other Old Testament believers. In the New Testament, walking by (or *in*) faith is an expression of similar import; as is also walking after, or according to, the Spirit; that is acting under the Holy Spirit's guidance and influences—and these expressions may, I conceive, be fairly taken as explanatory of the former.

But reducing the term to the simple idea of PLEASING God, this will be found sufficient for our argument, according to our apostle's method of reasoning; for he proceeds thus:—Enoch pleased God; but “without faith it is impossible to please him;” therefore, we assume, Enoch had faith; and as the apostle always speaks of faith as the gift of God, and the work of God's grace and Spirit, it amounts to so much as I am concerned to prove.

The faith of Enoch had no doubt an especial reference to the belief in the providence of God; for “he that cometh to him (and consequently he that walked with him) must believe that he is, and that

* Gen. iii. 8.

† Exod. xix. 19.

he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”—The doctrine of a future state, and consequent rewards and punishment, was therefore a part of the patriarchal creed.

This may be, and indeed has been, thought carrying Christianity too far back. It can hardly be questioned, however, that *that* ancient prophet, who predicted, “Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints [or holy ones] to execute judgment upon all; and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly [ungodly] committed, and of all their hard speeches that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”—It can hardly be questioned that this prophet was acquainted with those truths, and this we are especially told by the apostle Jude, was none other than Enoch, an *ancient* from Adam—the same of whom we are speaking.



THE PATRIARCHAL AGE.

Born B. C. 2912*—Died B. C. 2248

The character of this patriarch is comprised by Moses, his original biographer, in four words—“Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord—Noah was a just man—perfect in his generations—and Noah walked with God.” That is, in New-

* Gen. xiv. 25.

† Gen. vi. 9.

Test. 1.

Testament language, "He feared God, wrought righteousness, and was accepted of him." This all sprang from grace, and led him into the paths of progressive piety.

Noah, it should seem, was early brought up to husbandry, in order to ease his father's family, who sweated beneath the barrenness of the accursed ground, and with this view they called him NOAH, which implies *rest from labour* *.

About this time population greatly increased, the wickedness of men encreasing also. The more religious exceedingly relaxed in their moral conduct; and, as human nature naturally degenerates, the succeeding generation became monsters in violence, ambition, and lewdness, insonmuch that the Lord is represented after the manner of men, grieved and repenting that he had made man; because he "saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." †

This portrait differs considerably from what some writers have drawn of human nature: the difference will be vividly accounted for by readers. I consider that I account for it, from the different views which God and men have of the human heart. We see only some few prominent features of depravity; the rest, the blackest, are covered with integuments impervious to human sight: but "all things are naked and

* Gen. ix. 29.

† Gen. vi. 5; 6. See E. g. *Mog.*

opened : * to his view, like the bisected sacrifice to the priest ; like the anatomical subject to the dissector.

And the LORD said, “ My Spirit shall not always strive with man †.” But how did the Spirit of God strive with the inhabitants of the old world ?—When St. Peter informs us in one place, that “ Noah was a preacher of righteousness ‡ ;” and, in another, that the “ Spirit of Christ preached § ” to Noah’s contemporaries, I think it is very natural to infer that it was by Noah’s ministry, the Spirit of God *pleaded* or strove with mankind then, as he does now by the ministry of the gospel ; and farther I am not desirous to carry the exposition, though I know some apply it to the work of the Spirit upon the consciences of men in their conversion.

It is now time to advert to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who tells us, that “ by faith, Noah being divinely admonished of things not seen as yet, [the flood] prepared an ark to the saving of his house ; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith ¶.” He condemned the world, as every good man does, by a holy life : and became “ heir of the righteousness of faith,” that is, the righteousness of the gospel, by being adopted through faith into God’s family, as one of his children.

The event which follows is not so honourable to

* Heb. ix. 13. † Gen. vi. 3. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 20.

§ 1 Pet. i. 11. ¶ Heb. x. 39.

Noah's memory; but the feelings of great characters are often no less inductive than demonstrative.

After the flood, Noah commenced husbandry anew, he planted a vineyard, and was drunken with its fruits. Without any attempt to palliate vice, it may be supposed that the flood had produced an alteration in the earth, of which the Patriarch might not be aware. If the waters of the Nile, by their annual overflow, fructified the land of Egypt, how much more must the same effect be produced by the general deluge, and the dissolution of all animal and vegetable substances? The curse might, in some measure, be removed from the ground; and the fruits produced immediately after the flood, richer, and their juices of more strength than heretofore: he might therefore be now intoxicated with the same quantity of wine that formerly only served to strengthen and refresh him. That he was uncovered in his tent was a natural effect of the heat of the wine. The rudeness of Ham's behaviour, and the filial tenderness of his brethren, are subjects finely instructive; but we must pass them over. If we have erred in our apology for Noah, we have only copied the conduct of his dutiful children—we have cast a veil over his nakedness.

A B R A H A M.

B. A. D. C. 1756—Died 1821.

The Jews have a tradition that *Terah* was a statuee, and lived by making and selling ido's, and that his son *Abram* was occasionally his shopman. They tell a strange story of his once breaking all his father's images, and in revenge, telling him, they had quenched and destroyed one another's. This we claim a Jewish fable: There is no doubt, however, but *Abraham's* family was originally idolatrous; and that himself was educated in the same impiety, which made the grace of God more distinguishable in his conversion. Whether *Abraham* had any serious impressions in early life (as the above story implies) must be left. "When the God of Glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia," (as Stephen says †) he was "not disobedient to the heavenly vision." There is an efficacy in the voice of sovereign grace that must be heard, and a perspicuity that cannot be mistaken. "My sheep, hear my voice‡," saith the Shepherd, the rock of Israel.

It is the *principle* of our obedience which recommends it to the divine acceptance. It was "by *faith* *Abraham*, when he was called, OBEYED:" and there is a strength in that faith, more than equal to all the

* See Lev. x. He. x. 11. 22—28.

† Act. xiii. 2. ‡ John x. 27.

obstructions that the world and the flesh can set against it.—It was by “faith Abraham, being called to go out unto a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed, and WENT OUT, not knowing whither he went *.” Indeed this was of no consequence, while the divine Shecina (as it is probable) was his guide. He that walketh with God must be always safe, and always happy; except when an interposing veil of unbelief conceals the light of his countenance, as in some instances was the case even with Abraham. Then, indeed, Abraham prevaricates; David despairs; and Peter denies his Master.

Among the various discoveries which the Lord made of himself to Abraham, and in which he renewed his covenant to him, one of the most remarkable is, that which is related immediately after his victory over the four confederate kings, and the blessing of Melchisedec. “After these things, the word of the Lord came unto Abraham in a vision, saying, “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield, thy exceeding great reward †.” To this was subjoined the promise of a posterity, numerous as the stars of heaven, from among whom the Messiah was to arise, when as yet he had no child, was himself aged, and his wife barren. These obstacles served, however, only to render his faith more conspicuous and memorable—“He believed in the LORD, and it was counted to him for righteousness.”

* Heb. xi. 8

† Gen. xv. 1, &c.

As this is the first mention of believing in God in the Old Testament, for this, as well as for the eminency of his faith, he is honored with that appellation “the father of the faithful,” or of believers; and his faith hath this extraordinary commendation, that “against hope, he believed in hope—he staggered not at the promise through unbelief—but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;” for we can no way so much glorify God, as by an unlimited confidence in his promises.

The most extraordinary circumstance in Abraham's life, was the intended sacrifice of his son.—This history is well known, and has been illustrated by able writers: but there is one circumstance too interesting to our subject to be totally omitted.

“ Abraham (saith our Lord) rejoiced to see my day, he saw it, and was glad.” Abraham had, doubtless, various life visions of the future glories of the Messiah; but the most clear and remarkable seems to have been at this time. To this observation, I alluded, partly by a circumstance in the history, and partly by a remark of St. Paul. After Isaac had been buried, and the men buried in his field, as a memorial of his death, Abraham called the name of that place “*field of burial*,” whence it became a kind of proverbial prophecy, even to the time of Moses—“*In the mount of burial, or *field of burial*, to it is, the Lord shall appear, or be seen, and it is fully re-*

^a Reaction time, 15 min.

It is important to note that the above results are not statistically significant. The t -test is not applicable in this case because the data are not independent. The results are, however, suggestive of a positive relationship between the two variables.

markable that in this very place, not only was Solomon's Temple built, but Jesus Christ crucified, and perhaps on the very spot. But what evidence have we that Abraham looked thus far?—Hear the inspired commentator on this history—"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac:—accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;"—and probably expecting this to be the issue of the event:—"from whence also he received him (as one alive from the dead—in a figure &c.)"—There is what? Of our redemption: even Bishop WARBURTON admits this; and most beautifully it figured (as a parallel) the vicarious and voluntary death, the speedy and triumphant resurrection, of the Redeemer.

It is no forced inference from this event, that Abraham believed a future state: but we have farther evidence of this—"He looked for a city"—a city "which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God;"—in other words, he knew that when "the earthly house of his tabernacle" was dissolved, he had a building in the heavens;†—How nearly was the faith of Old and New Testament times allied!

Thus far is clear, that Abraham not only believed the faithfulness of God in promising him a posterity, and to that posterity the land of Canaan; but his faith had a particular reference to that "seed," in

* Heb. xi. 17--19.

† Ver. 10.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 1.

whom

when “all the nations of the earth” were to be “blessed.” He saw the day of his incarnation, death, and resurrection, and rejoiced in the comfort he derived from the believing view—thus his faith eminently realized “things hoped for,” and afforded an internal evidence of “things as yet unseen.”

Thus Abraham walked with God, as we still do, not by sight, but by faith; and for the remarkable intimacy of communion with which he was favoured, is honoured with this noblest of all titles, “the FRIEND of God †;” and the Lord himself is pleased to assume the peculiar title of “the God of Abraham ‡.”

But whence had Abraham this faith? Was he born with it? Nay; but he was an idolator till called by divine grace.—“Faith is the gift of God,” as already observed, and evidence is in the clearest manner the finger of God in its creation.—If Abraham was a pattern of our justification, as St. Paul teaches, he was also, doubtless, sanctified by the same grace that we are. New Testament experience and conduct, is “walking in the steps of our father Abraham’s faith †;” and they that are Christ’s, and have his Spirit in them, are, in the sublimest sense, “Abraham’s seed, and heirs with him of the same promise §.”

One thing more will, perhaps, throw some additional lustre upon this whole character; namely—

* Gen. xii. 5. † Ex. vi. 3. ‡ Rom. iv. 12. § Gal. iii. 27.

the grand and venerable patriarch who lived. The hon. *Daines Barrington*, calculates Abimelech's family at more than 150 persons. It must, therefore, have been very large, and his wealth proportionably considerable; which ranked him with contemporary kings and princes.—Piety in so elevated a situation, must be remarkably conspicuous; “a light set upon a hill,” whose lustre cannot be concealed.

S A R A H.

Born B. C. 1986.—Died 1859.

In Christ Jesus is “neither male nor female.” It was so under the former, as well as under the present dispensation; and there were “holy women of old,” as well as faithful men.—Among these Sarah is particularly pointed out as an example to believers of her own sex; whose daughters they are exhorted to approve themselves*.

Sarah being renowned for exercising the same faith, must be supposed to have been partaker of the same experience as her husband. Though the walk of female piety be different from that of the other sex, it requires the same divine assistance to support it with dignity and consistency.

Sarah's person was remarkably handsome; so much

* 1 Peter iii. 6.

so, that her husband was fearful of being taken for such, lest it should endanger his own life. It is hardly possible for the fiercest republican to express a severer satyr against courts, than is implied in Abraham's conduct. If it was not safe for a handsome woman at the decline of life (65 and 90) to travel with her husband, and that not in an uncivilized country, nor under the worst of kings, to what a height must injustice and debauchery have then arisen?

There is something mysterious in the repeated equivocation of this venerable pair, which can only be accounted for from the inconsistency of man, and that weakness and imperfection discovered in the conduct of the greatest saints. That the same man, who could leave his country and kindred, to become a pilgrim and sojourner in a foreign land, should yet be afraid to trust providence in such a circumstance:— and that he who could at one time resign his beloved home, should here betray so much weakness and irresolution, is only credible to such as recollect that themselves, though enabled to trust God satisfactorily with their souls, and eternal concerns, yet often distrust him in the smallest circumstances of common life.

But there is an event in Sarah's life, which has induced some persons to question her religion.

When the heavenly messengers visited Abraham*, they foretold (as indeed had been revealed to him before) that Sarah should bear a son—Sarah (who seem-

* Gen. xv. 1.

to have been listening) “LAUGHED within herself” at the improbability of such a circumstance. At this time, however, it appears not that she knew the heavenly visitors; for when she perceived who they were, she was ashamed of her conduct, and by faith “received strength to conceive seed”—judging him faithful who had promised.

Her conduct also to her servant *Hagar*, seems severe and unjustifiable; and, indeed, is not justified by the inspired historian; for it is one of the advantages of sacred history, that it relates the errors of its subjects without exaggeration or palliation.

This event may discover something of her natural temper, as assuming and severe; which is less to be wondered at in a person of her accomplishments and exalted sphere. Grace does not eradicate our natural tempers, though, in a measure, it subdues and restrains them.

Sarah's character is not introduced for its strength it affords to our argument, so much as in compliment to her sex, and to vindicate her faith and piety from some unaccountable suspicions that have been thrown out respecting it.

ISAAC.

Born B. C. 1835—Died 1716.

Isaac and Jacob were co-heirs with their father Abraham, of the great promise of the Old Testament.
—Salva-

—Salvation by the Messiah; and being such, they also, as our Apostle observes, were content to sojourn as pilgrims and strangers upon earth *.

We have an early and pleasing proof of Isaac's unaffected piety, and contemplative disposition in his walking out in the fields in the early part, “the *lark-ing-forth*,” of the evening (as the Hebrew beautifully expresses it) to exercise himself in prayer and meditation †. Delightful exercises, when the heart is prepared by divine grace! and I suppose that no situation is more calculated to cherish private devotion, or to feed our serious reflections, than rural scenes. Secluded from the world, we find company at home, and at once the privilege of communion with our own hearts, and with our God. A thousand surrounding objects serve to feed our meditation, and suggest matter for our petitions. In those eastern countries this was eminently true. A clear unclouded sky—a brilliant declining sun—a rural scenery that had never been produced by the hand of art—and the soft whispering of the evening breeze, have all a tendency to solemnize the mind, and prepare it for communion with its Creator, whose presence peoples the desert, and renders solitude delightful.

We should not omit, though it may be a trite observation, that while Isaac was thus meditating, he met with his beloved Rebecca; and it is hardly conjecture, to say, that she formed one subject of his

* Heb. xi. 13. † Gen. xxv. 18.

meditation; and he received her perhaps with sentiments not very different from those with which Adam received Eve,

Led by her heav'nly Maker tho' unseen,
And guided by his voice.
Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eyes,
In all her gestures modesty and love *.

The piety of Isaac was farther observable in his grief for the marriage of Esau with the idolatrous daughters of the land; as well as afterwards in the care he took (as Abraham had done by him) to prevent Jacob's committing the same folly.

But, the Apostle directs us for an instance of Isaac's faith to a circumstance in the decline of his life, though some few years before he died—"By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come †."

It appears difficult, to account for Isaac's blessing his children in faith, when it is evident he knew not which he blessed. The fact is, that, being filled with the prophetic spirit, he pronounced the blessing under a certainty that he spoke by divine inspiration, and in firm confidence, that the Lord would accomplish it, though he knew not perfectly the meaning of his own predictions. For this reason (namely, his inspiration) he could not revoke the blessing, though Esau sought to

* Par. L. 9, l. 43. v. 485.

† Heb. xii. 26.

it unkindly, and with tears, and his own natural affections were but too partial to the eldest son.

The prophecy itself seems chiefly to respect the different races of their posterity; but the pre-eminence of Jacob's blessing above his brother's, cannot be well accounted for, without it including in it the promise of the Messiah from his loins. It is in his kingdom that the sovereignty of the nations resides; and "the government is upon his shoulders:" and without including this, we shall find it very difficult to justify the veracity of the prediction. Indeed, the blessing was connected with the birth-right; and seeing procured the one, he saw the importance of securing the other. This was in union with the design of providence, and therefore succeeded; though without affording any excuse for the weakness of one party, or the duplicity of the other. "We may see herein (says Dr. *J. Owen*) the infinite purity of the divine will, effectually accomplishing its own purposes and designs, through the failings and miscarriages of men, without the least mixture with, or approbation of their iniquities or miscarriages: He accepted their persons, pardoned their sins, and effected the matter herein according to their designs."

I cannot help observing, before we proceed, that God is not only called God of Isaac, as he is of the other Patriarchs, but particularly Jacob's blessing "the FEAR OF" his "father" (Gen. xxxi. 42). It is in

* *Owen's works*, vol. iv. p. 190.

[Gen. xxxi. 42.

plies any thing peculiar, I think it is that Isaac discovered a remarkable *reverence* for the divine Majesty, before whom, and as living in his immediate presence, he is said to walk.

JACOB

Born B. C. 1837—Died 1687.

Jacob and Esau are very properly selected as proofs of the sovereignty of divine grace: For I strongly suspect that if their characters, merely as men, were impartially weighed, Jacob's would be found the less amiable. At least, there is a certain cunning and duplicity which governed his conduct before conversion, and influenced it too much afterward. Witness the manner in which he supplanted Esau, outwitted Laban, and deceived his father Isaac. His being called "a plain man," seems rather to refer to his plain manner of life, as a shepherd and pilgrim "dwelling in tents *," than to the simplicity of his natural disposition.

Jacob's conversion may, I conceive, be dated from the vision at Luz, when he had his first view into the spiritual world, and to which he frequently refers as a memorable *epoch* of his life.

* Gen. xvi. 27. The Chinese are extremely fond of plain and simple things, very compatible with our religious scruples.

“ This vision, in whatever point of view we consider it, was a most beautiful display of the communication opened between heaven and earth, through the medium of a Redeemer. Its extending from earth to heaven, points out a way of access to God for fallen man. The various steps mark the progress of the divine life, and the walk of a believer, every step of which approaches nearer to heaven and glory. The ascending and descending of the angels, shews the office of those ministering spirits, in performing embassies of kindness for us. And the Lord standing above, and renewing his covenant, may teach us that all his blessings are bestowed in that means of commutation, namely, through the mediation of the Son of God .’

Upon this occasion Jacob says, “ Surely God was in this place, and I knew it not; and he was afraid and said, How fearful (אֲוִיָּהּ) is this place + !” — He must have known that God is every where, though he had no experience of his special presence: but on this occasion he vowed a vow, saying, “ If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and I will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I return to my father’s house in peace: then the Lord shall be my God: and this stone (the stone on which he had slept) shall be God’s House; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give

* *Lectionnaire de l’Eglise d’Orient*. Page 106 (D).

† Gen. xlii. 16.

the tenth unto thee *.” It should be observed, that the blessings for which Jacob here covenants, were all virtually, and almost literally, included in the promise made him in the preceding vision; nor does his language imply any distrust of the divine faithfulness, but rather (at least in the original Hebrew †) a considerable degree of confidence. If there is any thing to censure here, it is that the patriarch lays a greater stress upon food and raiment, than the promise warranted; and passes over too lightly the more important blessing included in the promise of the Messiah. But we are all so apt to commit the same error, if it was one, that we should censure him with tenderness and caution.—The Lord graciously fulfilled his part of the engagement, and Jacob kept his **Vow.**

The believer's life is a continued intercourse with heaven. Such was Jacob's. Another instance of it is observable, when he was much alarmed and distressed under the expectation of meeting Esau, and humbled under a sense of his own unworthiness. “I am not worthy (says he) of the least of all thy mercies”—or more literally—“I am less than **ANY** ‡ of thy mercies, and than **ANY** of thy truth, which

* Gen. xxviii. 20-22. † Also in loc. and Park. in 28.

‡ The differentiation of our language frequently requires, **ALL**, to be rendered any, and our translators have done so in Exod. xx. 4. Levit. iv. 2. et al. freq. and should have done the same in some other places.

thou hast shewed [or performed] unto thy servant *." On which we may observe, that he learned this lesson, where most of us do, in the school of affliction; one great design of which is, to humble the believer, who is therein exercised.

"Before honour is humility." The succeeding night Jacob was honoured with a divine appearance under a human form; nor was it a mere aerial shadowy form; for when he was left alone, "there wrestled a man with him until the break of day;" and this man, it appears from a variety of circumstances, could be no other than the Son of God †, and was so understood to be by the patriarch, from the name he gave the place, *PENIEL*, the face of God; for, said he, "I have seen God face to face." And from his prevalence with this divine person, he received his better name of *ISRAEL*, a prince with God; because, said the angel, "as a prince thou hast power with God and men, and hast prevailed ‡." In which instance, his earnestness and perseverance was a pattern to subsequent believers. "The kingdom of heaven [still] suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

Jacob's life was too much variegated for us to review it article by article; we hasten, therefore, to the close of it. "By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, and worshipped

* Gen. xxxii. 19.

† See *F. J. A. History of Redemp.* p. 199, Note (A)

‡ Gen. xxxii. 24-25.

{leaning} upon the top of his staff *.”—The same probably with which he first passed Jordan †, and which now reminded him of the various stages of his mortal pilgrimage.

The scene to which we are now introduced, is one of the finest a sentimental mind can witness. It is that of an old man, grey with years and rich in virtues,—like a flock of corn fully ripe, gathered unto the garner—such a man DYING? no! that term does not accurately describe the exit of a good man, who has filled up his generation work, and with hopes full of immortality, waits for his dismissal. Such was the situation of the patriarch Israel, when he gathered his family around his couch, and announced his departure with the same cheerfulness, as if he was only setting out upon a journey, to take possession of an inheritance. This indeed was the fact, for he considered himself a pilgrim and a journeyer on earth, as his fathers had been before, and looked for an inheritance beyond the skies.

I could with much pleasure, did my room admit, review the various and distinct blessings Jacob pronounced upon his children, as most of them discover a mind filled with great objects and noble sentiments: but I must confine myself to a single observation—that in the midst of his predictions, and in immediate connexion with the blessing of *Benjamin*, he breaks out into this pious exclamation: “I have waited for

* Heb. xi. 21. † Gen. xxxii. 10.

thy salvation, O LORD *!"—On which the Chaldee paraphrase thus expatiates—"I expect not the salvation of Gideon, son of Joash, which is a temporal salvation; nor the salvation of Sampson, son of Manoa, which is a transitory salvation; but the salvation of MESSIAH, the son of David, who shall come to bring unto himself the sons of Israel; whose salvation my soul desireth." Thus Jacob, as well as Abraham, desired to see Christ's day, and may we not add that by faith "he saw it and was glad?" and thus he left the world in the same spirit as aged Simeon—"Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy great salvation †."

J O S E P H.

Born B. C. 1755—Died 1635.

This patriarch has been more frequently the subject of the biographic pen, than any of the preceeding. Indeed his life abounds with those striking incidents and wonderful turns of providence, which render it peculiarly interesting.

Joseph was his father's favourite before Benjamin; whence his parti-coloured coat, and thence the hatred of his brethren. Parents should consider that by

* Gen. xlix. 18. † Luke ii. 29.

distinguishing a darling child, they often mark him out as the butt of envy in the family.

The Lord revealed to Joseph his future fortunes, in two remarkable dreams. The relation of these raised the envy of his brethren; and their accomplishment seemed highly improbable, even to his father. Indeed, there are few of us but may recollect providences, under our own observation, that seemed equally unlikely but a short time before they took place.——We may also, perhaps, call to mind other instances, in which the very means used to hinder events, have in the end produced them. This was remarkably the case here; and shews the sovereignty of God in effecting his purposes. When men of the world oppose his designs, and endeavour to thwart his decrees, “he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision.”—“He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;” and “with the froward he will shew himself”—not “froward,” but—*tortuous*, intricate, mysterious*,—“great in council and excellent in working.”

We proceed to Joseph’s advancement, and consequent temptation†; when however “his bow abode

* Pl. xviii. 26. See Park. in 77B.

† I beg leave to observe, that Joseph’s temptation is related in terms which suggest no lasciviousness; whereas our translators have thought good to add no less “of a temptation exceeding great.” In *Deut. 1. 8.* (for instance) though with equal liberty, the sense which is intended from this, fully justifies the remark.

in strength, the arms of his hands being made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob." The consequence, indeed, through the baseness of his mistress, seemed fatal to his hopes, and he became a prisoner.

It is probable, however, that when Pharaoh's chief butler was restored, whose dream Joseph had interpreted, he thought his deliverance near; but alas! "the butler forgot Joseph," and it was full two years before he recollected him. Then he is brought before Pharaoh, as an interpreter of dreams; but he frankly declares, "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace *." When his dreams had been explained, most remarkable is Pharaoh's reason for his promotion; "Can we find such an one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is †?" This undoubtedly refers to the spirit of prophecy, as it is explained by the psalmist ‡, and in the Chaldee paraphrase.

There is something peculiarly amiable and pious, in the manner in which Joseph discovers himself to his brethren, especially if we compare it with his afflicted severity before. "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt! Now therefore"—seeing providence hath thus disposed events—"be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God did send me before you to preserve life §." How tenderly,

* Gen. xli. 16.

† Ver. 38.

‡ Ps. cxlii. 12.

§ Gen. xlv. 4. See also l. 21.

does he prevent their self-reproaches, and check their rising grief; referring all things to the superintendence of a divine providence!

By faith Joseph died also, and then in confidence of the fidelity of God's promise; "made mention of the departing of the children of Israel" out of Egypt, and as a proof of his faith, "gave commandment concerning his bones *," that they should be carried with them into Canaan; which afterwards was done accordingly †.

No human character is without its blemishes! Those of Joseph in particular, teach us the contaminating nature of courts. Good men, like Joseph, may indeed teach virtue there, but can hardly be expected to escape without some infection from their vices. Even Joseph learned that piece of court idolatry, to swear by the life of Pharaoh †.

If there could be any doubt of the real piety of any of the preceding characters, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews has said enough to remove it in his general remark, that "All these died in faith, not having received" the fulfilment of "the promises; but having seen them afar off, were" fully "persuaded" of their truth, "embraced" them with the most cordial affection; and "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a

* Gen. l. 25, 26. Heb. xi. 22 † Exod. xlii. 9

‡ Gen. xlii. 15, 16.

country even—"an heavenly country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, because he has provided for them a city *"—namely, the New Jerusalem. No words could express more fully the faith of the Hebrew patriarchs in a future state. Indeed, the single expression of *dying in faith*, strongly implies as much; for how can that man dye in faith, who has no expectations beyond the grave?—We see also the force of our Lord's argument against the Sadducees, who denied both the resurrection and the soul's immortality †: for God would have been ashamed to have been called the God of the ancient believers, if he had made no provision for them beyond the tomb.

Religion, we may also observe, is the same thing under every dispensation. Good men were always pilgrims and strangers upon earth. Heaven is their country, and that (as our Lord observes) is the reason why the world does not know them ‡.

We must now turn aside to relate a history important to our design, though the subject of it was not of the chosen line; nor is in our apostle's list. The following may therefore be considered as an appendix to this chapter.

* Heb. xii. 22.—† Mat. xxi. 31.—‡ 1 John. i. 10.

J O B

Flourished about 1700 B. C.

It is generally agreed that this venerable person lived in the patriarchal ages, and that his story was written by Moses, even before the Pentateuch. From its great antiquity, as well as some other circumstances, this is reckoned the most difficult to translate, and, in many places, to interpret, of any book in the Old Testament.

It is written in a dramatic form, and in the highest style of Hebrew poetry. I cannot suppose that the several speakers uttered the exact words used by Moses; because it is quite out of nature for persons in great distress, or in warm debate, to express themselves in poetry. But the author being acquainted, either by inspiration or otherwise, with the facts, and the substance of the conversation, threw it into this dramatic form.

In the same manner I account for the machinery (as the stage-writers call it) introduced, as that of the Devil conversing with the Almighty, who is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;” much less would he admit the author of it to familiar converse. But the writer, to account for Job’s misfortunes, introduces infernal agents, agreeable to the Hebrew philosophy (which is perhaps more true than has generally been supposed) as the perpetrators; and yet, lest this
should

should appear to infringe the rights of providence, he refers the whole to the divine permission. Thus far I conceive to be fact ; the rest poetry.

The book opens with informing us of the character and circumstances of Job :—that he was an Arabian, and the most wealthy man of all the East ;—that he was equally eminent for piety as for prosperity : highly beloved of God ; and universally esteemed by men. Yet it pleased God, for the trial of his faith and patience, to permit him to fall into the most distressing calamities. He was stripped of his possession, bereaved of his family, smitten with a loathsome disease, and reproached by the few friends who did not utterly forsake him. These men, though eminent in years, in wisdom, and even in religion, appear to have grossly mistaken the doctrine of providence. They imagined Job's uncommon affliction to be evidence of his insincerity ; that had he been upright in his religion, God would not have suffered him to fall into such misfortunes : But Job knew his own integrity ; and was aware that “ no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before him ; ” —that, in the present life, “ all things happen alike to all ; ” and even the worst characters sometimes meet with the greatest success and temporal prosperity. In this view he spake of God and his providence, “ the things that were right,” more than either of his friends.

How much LESS * abominable and filthy man,
Who drinketh up iniquity like water !†

2. In several passages Job reflects on his former prosperity, and compares it with his present state of darkness and desolation.

“ O that I were as [in] months passed ;
As [in] the days [when] God preserved me !
When his LAMP shone upon my head ;
[When] by his light I walked thro’ darkness !
As I was in the days of my PROSPERITY ‡,
When the PRESENCE § of God was upon my tent,
When the All-bountiful was with me ¶ !”

And in another place he complains,

“ How many are my iniquities and sins !
My transgression and my iniquity cause me to know †
Wherefore I hidest thou thy face ;
And thou rejectest all my entreaties ‡
Wilt thou break the vessel I have made ?
Even the dry stubble, wilt thou perish it ?

* *Job* xix. 20, “ *How much less abominable and filthy man is he than I !*”

† *Job* xxxi. 35—36.

‡ *Psalms* lxxviii. 6, “ *Thou shalt say, I was as a laughing stream in the day of my prosperity.*”

§ *Psalms* lxxviii. 6, “ *Thou shalt say, I was as a laughing stream in the day of my prosperity.*”

¶ *Job* xxv. 2—5.

Yet thou writest bitter things against me,
And makest me to possess the iniquities of my
youth *."

3. Under such circumstances he particularly implores the divine presence and favour, in the following language,

"O that I knew where I might find him !
I would come unto his judgment-seat ;
I would prepare [my] cause before him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.
I should know the words which he would answer me,
And understand what he would say unto me.
With great power would he plead against me ?
Nay, rather himself would infuse [strength] into me.
There the upright might reason with him,
And (there) I should be delivered for ever from
my judge †."

4. In the midst of all Job's complaints and sorrows, he strongly expresses confidence in God: The most remarkable instance of this follows :

"O that my words were now written !
O that they were delineated in a book !
That they were engraven with an iron pen and lead !
That they were sculptured in the rock for ever !

* Job xlii. 24---26. † Chap. xxiii. 3---7.

For I know that my REDEEMER liveth,
 And at the last he shall arise upon the dust;
 And hereafter shall my skin [again] surround this
 [body,]
 And in my flesh shall I behold the DEITY *:
 Whom I shall behold as mine—mine eyes shall see,
 and not a stranger's.
 —My reins are consumed within me †!"

The last sentence expresses the good man's ardent desires for the blessedness his faith foresaw. But the grand objection to applying this passage to the resurrection and a future state (as I have done) is that Job had in a preceeding part of the book (ch. xiv.) spoken decisively against these doctrines. Admitting nevertheless, that Job really questioned or denied these in the hour of temptation and distress, it is no more than many good men have done, and will not prove but that his views might be more clear and bright afterward. I confess myself, however, strongly disposed to believe that the passage ought to be rendered in a very different manner, and that the following version, though it may seem a little strange to some readers, is more consistent, argumentative, and poetic, as well as more devotional, than the common one. Yet I wish to offer it with diffidence, as too much of it is my own to speak confidently.

* Job. xix.

† מֵאֵל דֵּיטָא, Deity, Godhead.

“ Man born of woman is few of days and full of trouble ;

As a flower he cometh forth, and is cut down :

Also, as a shadow he fleeth, and continueth not.

Yea, upon such an one openest thou thine eyes *,

And bringest me into judgment before thee ?

Who can bring a clean (thing) out of an unclean ?

No one.——

† SINCE [then] his days are determined, the number of his months with thee,

Since thou hast appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass ;

Withdraw from him, and he shall cease [from labour]

Until, like an hireling, he shall be satisfied [for] his day.

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it may sprout again,

And that the tender branch thereof will not cease [to vegetate,]

Though the root thereof decay in the earth,

And its stock die in the ground ;

Thro' the scent of water it will bud,

And bring forth boughs like a [young] plant :

So ‡ man dieth and wasteth away ;

He expireth, and where (is) he ?

Waters fail from the spring-head,

* That is to fix th'm, with particular attention, as upon a prisoner at the bar.

† EX. See Ezek. xxxv. 6. ‡ See ver. 12, and Isa. liii. 7. b. Heb

The stream also wasteth, and drieth up :

So man layeth down, and shall not arise, until the
heavens be no more * :

[Till then] they shall not awake, nor be roused
from their sleep.

O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave !

That thou wouldst conceal me, till thy wrath be
passed !

That thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and re-
member me !

SINCE man dying shall yet live [again],

All the days of my appointed warfare will I wait,

Until my RENOVATION † come.

[Then] thou shalt call, and I will answer thee :

For thou shalt have a desire to the work of thine
own hands ‡ .”

For brevity's sake, the reader will excuse my entering at large into the reasons on which this version is grounded §, especially as a justification of it is not essential to our grand point. Indeed, the whole which we have said on the resurrection and a future state, is a digression; yet it is a digression in some views important to our subject, since I conceive the doctrine of a future life essential to true godliness ;

* *Numeri*, c. xix. v. 24. *Job*, c. xiv. v. 12. according to the *Arist.* design of the prophet, *Job*, c. xiv. v. 12.

† *Job*, c. xiv. v. 12. to “ *1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.*”

‡ *Job*, c. xiv. v. 12.

§ *Salm.* of the *Temple*, *Psalm*, *Psalm*, *Psalm*, *Psalm*, *Psalm*, &c.

and cannot but much wonder at the plea, to some learned men seem to have taken in endeavouring to eradicate it from the Old Testament; and in representing the holy patriarchs as involved in darkness worse than heathen, since the wiser heathens certainly hoped for another life, and made that the grand stimulative of their virtue.

But to return, I would only add to the above passages from *Job* himself, a few extracts from the speeches of ELIHU, a personage introduced in so extraordinary a manner, that the commentators know no what to make of him. Some have taken him for a prophet; others, for the Son of God himself; but all for a most wise and good man.

He opens his discourse thus :

“ I (am) young, and ye are very aged,
Wherefore I was timid; and feared to shew you
mine opinion.
I said, Days should speak, and the multitude of
years teach wisdom;
But the Spirit himself [dwelleth] in man,
And the inspiration of the All-bountiful * giveth
him understanding †.”

The next short passage, from Elihu, shall close these

* *Gen. i. 2.* *Ps. lxxviii. 1.* *Isa. xli. 1.* the source of beneficence.

† *Job. xxxii. 8.* *Isa. xli. 1.* See also chap. xxxiii. 14.

“ Surely,

“ Surely it should be said to the Almighty,
I have borne punishment—I will offend no more ;
What I discern not yet, do thou teach me ;
If I have wrought iniquity, I will add no more *.”

Such should, and ever will be, the language of a true penitent, though it may be varied in expression, according to the dispensation he is under.

The passages transcribed from JOB’s speeches, authorize us to add him to the instances of primitive piety ; and we have reason to believe that he died in faith, as well as that he finished his days with a double portion of peace and external prosperity.

The extracts from ELIHU shew that great character’s views of true religion, and the source whence it is derived, namely, from the inspiration of the Divine Spirit.

* Job xxviii. 31, 32.

C H A P. III.

WITNESSES UNDER THE MOSAIC ECONOMY.

M O S E S.

Born B. C. 1571.—Died 1451.

WE now return to our inspired guide, and pursue the history of piety through the remainder of the Old Testament. The infant beauty of Moses is particularly remarked in the scriptures. Stephen says he was “divinely fair*,” and this was ordered by Providence, as a means of preserving his life, and introducing him to the Egyptian court. Here he acquired the sciences of that famous country; but these formed the least valuable part of his knowledge: for the Lord appears to have made him early discoveries of himself, and of his grace. Moses, was evidently a man of the sublimest genius, and knew the relish of what we call literary acquirements; but when things were naturally given to him, these he “counted loss,” for the sake of true religion. Yea, he counted all things “loss and dung†,” in comparison with the blessedness implied in the promise of redemption to his fathers.—“Loss em-
ing the reproach of Christ (or the Messiah) greater

* Act. vii. 20. Ἀποθεῖται ὁμοῦ.

† Σκεῖλα, exiles, cogitation. Phil. iii. 8.

riches than the treasures in Egypt *.” It should seem, that Moses, and some others, would often express their confidence in the divine promises, and that exposed them (as it ever will good men) to reproach and ridicule, to affliction and persecution. Moses, in particular, when he was come to years of knowledge and maturity, “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” being enabled thereto by faith, and supported therein by having “respect unto the recompence of reward,” and as “seeing him who is invisible” to carnal eyes. These expressions are so strong, that even *Warburton* is forced to admit Moses believed in a future state, though he will by no means admit the same of the Israelites in general.

“Through faith also he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood; lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them †.”—And this faith, doubtless, respected not only the promise of security in that instance, but also looked onward to the great Antitype of this institution, “the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world;” for we have seen Moses was a christian, and gloried in that reproach.

If Moses, and the believing Israelites, kept the passover by faith, by analogy of reasoning, so did they the other typical institutions. Indeed there is no medium between this supposition and that of their being children or idiots. If hieroglyphics were the

* Heb. ch. 26.

† Ver. 23.

first letters, and particularly familiar in Egypt, (as they certainly were) types may be considered as the easiest and most natural means of preaching the gospel to the primitive Israelites. It may be said of types, as of parables, that they are the best adapted means for instruction to those whose hearts were previously disposed to receive it; and least calculated to expose the sublime mysteries of religion, to those who would abuse or ridicule them. This was the grand reason that JESUS spake in parables*, and probably that *Moses* taught by types.

Here the reader may naturally enquire, whether any of these types taught the truths we are defending? In my apprehension they most certainly did. The various ceremonial *ablutions* intimated the double consequence of sin, guilt and pollution; and pointed out its twofold remedy by the blood of atonement, and the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

The anointing with oil was also an intelligible and expressive type of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not only in his extraordinary officers, on Christ and his apostles, but also in those more ordinary, but more important, influences, by which every Christian is appointed to be a king and priest unto God.

But what seems most expressly to our purpose, the rite of *Onction*, or the design of which, *Christ* himself declared, when he tells the disciples, just

* Mark iv. 11, 12.

† 1 John ii. 27. Rev. i. 6.

before his death—"The LORD thy God will CIRCUMCISE thine HEART, and the heart of thy seed to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live &c." This is what the apostle *Paul* calls "the circumcision made without hands; in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ †," or the Christian circumcision.—"For we are the true circumcision, saith the same inspired writer) who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh ‡."—"For he is not a Jew [in the best sense] who is one outwardly; neither is that [the true] circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew [indeed] who is one inwardly, and [the true] circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God §."

But to return to Moses, his character in the scriptures is composed of fidelity, fervor, and especially *meekness*; in which last virtue, however, he particularly failed at the "waters of Maribah," by mixing as is but too common, human passion, with his religious zeal.

It should be added, Moses was "mighty in prayer," and admitted to the most intimate communion with Deity, that was ever granted to a mere creature—JEHOVAH spake with him "mouth to mouth ¶."

* Deut. xxi. 6.

† Col. ii. 11.

‡ Phil. iii. 3.

§ Rom. ii. 29, 30.

¶ Numb. xii. 5--8.

This leads me to remark, that Moses also was a prophet, the first of the inspired writers, and particularly eminent for the dignified simplicity and true sublimity of his style. Besides the Pentateuch, he wrote the 90th Psalm, on which I beg leave to offer a remark or two.

The former part contrasts the eternity of God with our mortality—He is from everlasting to everlasting—our lives, even at the largest antediluvian standard, are in his sight as yesterday:—not while we are wearing it out in laborious business, heedless devotion, or insipid amusements—but as it appears when it is PAST. The progress of human life is compared to the sweeping flood—the morning sleep *—the changing grass.

“For we are consumed in thine anger,
And in thy wrath are we hurried away.
Thou hast set our iniquities before thee,
Our secret (sins) in the light of our countenance;
For our days pass away in thy great anger,
We spend our years as a *REVERIE* †.”

The beauty of these sentiments need not be pointed out; but there is one which particularly demands our attention.—“Thou hast set our secret sins IN THE LIGHT OF THY COUNTENANCE. Observe, that God

* V. 15. “Thy sleep is as the morning.” Ps. 121.

† Ps. x. 9. “*ut in somno*,” (Psalm 10 “when asleep.”)

not only seeth those actions which are also exposed to the world—but our most secret iniquities, the word that yet is upon our tongue; yea, the thought that is within our heart: he not only seeth these, but places them in the most conspicuous view before him—"in the light of his countenance:"—he beams his glory directly upon them: sets them in contrast to his own purity: Thus seeth he the whole of our most secret impurities, and seeth them in all their deformity. But the fulness of the text is not yet exhausted: When our secret sins are placed in the light of God's countenance; then we behold them too, and in a very different manner from what we are used to do. In his "light we see light." Moles are visible in the sun beams; so those sins which appear trivial to us, or rather which do not appear at other times, now strike us as enormities. His glory discovers our vileness, his holiness displays our impurity. Job long justified himself, and skilfully parried the charges of his friends: 'This was false, and that was aggravated: But when he saw the divine glory beaming around him—then he cried, in a mixture of astonishment and confusion, "Behold, I am vile, I abhor myself in dust and ashes."

JOSHUA.

Born B. C. 1553—Died 1443.

When Moses died, “the Spirit of Wisdom” descended upon Joshua, and he, the typical Jesus led the chosen people into Canaan. Joshua, it may be remembered was one of the faithful spies, who not only brought a good report of the promised land, but encouraged the people to attack it, in confidence of the divine support. “If the LORD delight in us (said he), then will he bring us into this land, and give it us, a land flowing with milk and honey.” Joshua and his partner Caleb, who concurred with him, were therefore the only two of that generation which were spared to enter Canaan, and subdue the devoted inhabitants. On this occasion Joshua was honoured in a most singular manner. The sun and moon stood still at his command †: i. e. either the earth (and with it the moon) was stopped in its diurnal course; or rather perhaps, the light of those celestial luminaries miraculously protracted on the scene of action, until the victory was complete.

This might be innumeraled among the wonders wrought by Faith, but our inspired guide, St. Paul, has chosen to select another instance to celebrate the faith of Joshua. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell

* Num. xiv. 8.

† Josh. x. 12, 13.

down after they had been compassed about seven days." Though Joshua is not expressly mentioned here, yet there is no doubt, as Dr. *Owen* observes, but the Apostle had an "especial respect" to him. And indeed, it required faith to conduct such a procession amid the ridicule and taunts, in all probability, of the besieged; weapons that have been found too powerful for many that have "laughed at the sword and spear in battle."

There is something very noble and pious in the closing scene of Joshua's life. After a variety of arguments to urge Israel to persevere in serving JEHOVAH and him only, he thus speaks of himself—"Behold, this day, I am going the way of all the earth!" with what complacency does the good man speak of his departure! I confess this satisfaction in death which we find in many old-testament believers, is with me a strong argument, that they expected a future state. No man, I conceive, either Jewish, Heathen, or Christian, ever died happily, or comfortably, without a hope beyond the grave.—"I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you; not one thing hath failed thereof." From this he justly infers an equal fidelity to the divine threatenings in case of disobedience.

In a subsequent, and his last, address to the people, he exhorts them still more earnestly to the fear and worship of JEHOVAH—"If it seem evil to you to

serve the LORD; choose you this day whom you will serve—but as for me, and my house, we will serve the LORD.” In this spirit and temper the good man took leave of the world, and died an hundred and ten years old.

R A H A B.

Flourished about 1351 B. C.

“By (or through) faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, because she received the spies with peace.” From the ambiguity of the Hebrew term applied to Rahab in the Old Testament, and which equally signifies a *harlot* or an *hostess*, some divines have endeavoured to clear her moral character. It hurts their feelings, perhaps, that a harlot should be the only person saved in a populous city. But as we know that “harlots enter the kingdom of Heaven*” before more precious characters, and as St. Paul’s language is less equivocal, I choose to glorify divine grace in believing that she had been of that criminal profession before her conversion. But how shall we account for the spies lodging at her house? If those who kept houses of entertainment were generally of right character, as it should seem, they had no alternative; and their preference of her house is suffi-

* Matt. xxi. 31, 32.

ently accounted for, from recollecting its situation, which being upon the wall, was best adapted for their escape, as the event proved.

The history evinces, however, that whatever might have been her former character, she was now under serious impressions, and a believer in the God of Israel. “I know (said she) that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land MELT *, because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt, and what ye did to the two kings of the Amorites that were on the other side of Jordan, Sihon, and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard, our hearts did melt, neither arose in any more courage in any man, because of you: for the LORD your God, he is God in the Heaven above, and in the earth beneath †.” Agreeable to this confession she covenanted with the spies for her own life, and the lives of her family, which were therefore preserved when they took the city.

In the honorable mention of Rahab's faith, we are not left at liberty to justify the means by which she accomplished her ends, namely, the falsehoods she told respecting them. Engaged in a good cause, (the preservation of life,) most probably she thought any means lawful that might accomplish her design; nor is this to be wondered at in a woman, but just emerg-

* Ex. 15. 15.

† Ex. 15. 17.

† Josh. 2. 9---11.

ing from heathenism, when we have too often seen the same maxim adopted by those of long standing in religion.

THE JUDGES.

To recur again to our apostolic guide, he adds—“Time would fail me to tell of GIDEON, and BARAK, and JEPHTHA, and DAVID, and SAMUEL, and the Prophets”—But few of these characters have any thing related of them very material to our purpose: The three former I shall therefore entirely omit, very briefly mention Samuel the prophet, and pass on our way to David, who will arrest our attention more particularly.

SAMUEL.

Born B. C. 1171—Died 1060.

HANNAH, the mother of Samuel, was a woman of a sorrowful spirit, and the vent she gave her passions was so uncommon, that the good old prophet ELI thought she was intoxicated, and reproved her for it: But what was an abomination to the Priest, was acceptable to the Lord: thus easy is it for us to mistake human actions; but the Lord reads the heart. Some persons

persons of strong passions are apt to express themselves with that vehemence, which appears more like enthusiasm than devotion; but we should be extremely cautious in our censures, where we can form no certain judgment.

Her prayer was heard. Samuel was given her as an answer to her prayers, and she lent him to the Lord. Thus was her sorrow turned to joy, and her mourning to a song *. The child grew, like our infant Redeemer, both in favour with God and man; was very early called, not only by the spirit of grace, but also by the spirit of prophecy, and acknowledged for a faithful prophet throughout all Israel.

Nothing immediately to our purpose occurs in the life of Samuel; but the closing scene is too fine to be omitted—after appealing to Israel with respect to the integrity of his conduct, and his impartial admiration of justice among them, he concludes his last exhortation with pressing them to cleave unto the Lord alone: “For the LORD (says he) will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people.†”—A great encouragement this to weak and disconsolate minds! For if the Lord’s choice of his people arose from works forseen, or from any other source than his own good pleasure, there is far too much cause to fear that the best of us might at last come short of his appointed rest.

* 1 Sam. ii.

† Chap. xii. 22.

THE TESTIMONY

D A V I D.

Born B. C. 1085.—Died 1015.

We now come to one of the most interesting characters in the Bible, the materials of whose life, are happily very copious. I have no design, however, to be David's biographer, that office has been performed by a much abler hand*; what I design is, a mere sketch of some principal circumstances of his experience; in order to which I shall consider his PSALMS in a light perhaps somewhat novel, but I hope no less just; namely, as a *diary* of his *experience*, in which we might trace, by throwing them into chronological order, the variety of his frames, and feelings under his various circumstances and situations.

The early part of David's life was spent among the sheep-folds, and in the innocent and pleasing scenes of pastoral simplicity, from which he borrowed the scenery of several psalms, particularly the 23^d, though I do not conceive any of them composed at this early period.

Though we cannot date accurately the conversion of David, we have sufficient reason to conclude it preceded his anointing, and took place while he was a young man in his father's house; for notwithstanding

* Dr. Cressel.

ing neither his parents nor the prophet Samuel saw any thing remarkably promising in him; yet the Lord, who “searcheth the heart,” and “seeth not as man seeth,” saw the grace he had conferred, and approved the early buds of that piety which he had implanted.

It is also probable that, soon after this event, he became the subject of prophetic influences, and accompanied his divine raptures upon the harp. There is no certainty, however, that we have any of his compositions of a date so early, though his musical fame first introduced him at Saul’s court.

His combat with Goliath is one of the most celebrated events of his life; and several psalms are thought to have been composed about this time, and with peculiar reference thereto; but I conceive that some, and perhaps all of them, may with more propriety be referred to subsequent events.

During his persecutions from Saul, however, we know that he composed several, and it will not be foreign from our purpose, to notice some of them with a view of discovering the various affections and sensations of his mind, during this period of trials and vicissitudes.

The thirty-sixth psalm* was, probably, one of the

* The psalm is altogether short, each verse beginning with a different part of the psalm. (Q. 17.) Where are all these psalms composed? The psalmist was a man of letters, and were they not written up, dictated on parchment, or impressed thereon, he could hardly call to memory, when he wanted the opportunity to write them down?

first of these, when Saul had “left off to be wise and to do good,” and “when he devised iniquity on his bed;” about the time that his jealousy first brake out. It is true, that he was at this time partially insane; but it was a wicked insanity; and it is well known that pride, envy, and jealousy, are among the common causes of madness. Now though the actions of a lunatic, while such, cannot be charged with moral turpitude; yet I doubt not but the Lord often thus punishes the evil passions of mankind, and so makes them reap the fruit of their own doings. Many instances have occurred among the persecutors of the church. The emperor Charles V. is a remarkable one, and the more so, as he, like Saul, sought relief in music, and found it a palliative, though not a cure:—for alas! what can cure a heart possessed with such passions?

To return to David—while Saul gave himself up to sin, David gave himself to prayer, and to contemplation on the mysteries of providence, and the excellent provisions made for the righteous, both here and in a future state.

“How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God!
 Therefore the children of men confide beneath the
 shadow of thy wings.
 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the richness
 of thy house;
 And thou shalt give them to drink of the river of
 thy pleasures;

For

For with thee is the fountain of life.
In thy light shall we see light *.”

In this passage the psalmist evidently refers to the gracious communications which the righteous receive from heaven; and which are to be considered as an earnest and foretaste of the fulness of joy therein reserved. There is the fountain of life and blessedness—whence the streams are plentifully communicated; wherewith the righteous are “abundantly satisfied” and refreshed—yea, as it were, *inbriated* (as the Hebrew term implies †) even in the present life.

The last clause is a just philosophical truth: “In thy light shall we see light.” God, like the sun, (says bishop *Horne*) cannot be seen, but by the light which himself emits.” The psalmist elsewhere more expressly compares the Deity to this celestial luminary. He is not only the author and conservator of natural, and the giver of eternal life; but, eminently the source of that which is spiritual and divine. The effects of the fall are like those of winter. When man had forsaken God, and he, in consequence, had withdrawn from man, we were left in the condition of certain animals, which remain torpid during the winter months; but when the sun gains strength, it restores life and light together.

David being settled in peace, now brings up the ark of God with much solemnity to Jerusalem, on

* Ps. cxviii. 7—9.

† See *Indistinctum. Paganus.*
which

Pſalm CX. was probably compoſed by David, about the ſame time, and relates to the ſame ſubject—the victories of divine grace.

“ JEHOVAH ſaid unto my Lord, ſit thou at my
right hand,
Until I make thine enemies thy footſtool.
JEHOVAH ſhall ſend the rod of thy ſtrength from
Zion;
Rule thou in the miſt of thine enemies!
Thy people [ſhall be] volunteers in the day of thy
power,
To the beauties of holineſs——
More than the dew from the womb of the dawn
ſhall be thy progeny *.”

Thus far I conſider as the promiſe of JEHOVAH unto his ſon, and it includes the following articles:

1. Complete victory over his enemies, and univerſal dominion over the world. He is “king of kings, and lord of lords.”

2. A more pleaſing and no leſs univerſal ſovereignty in the hearts of his people, “thy people ſhall be willing—volunteers—ſhall bring themſelves as free-will offerings, in the day of thy power:”—but to what ſhall they become voluntary converts? to the beauties of holineſs.—Or perhaps—“thy volunteers ſhall aſſemble and enliſt themſelves in thy beautiful

* Literally, “Before the womb of the morning [dawn] is the dew of thy progeny to thee.” *Psalm, LXXV.*

and glorious sanctuary.” How admirably was this fulfilled, when the standard of the cross was erected at Jerusalem, and thousands flocked unto it.—But, let it be remembered, this was to be accomplished in the day of Messiah’s power.—Here is the secret of conversion: they were volunteers, but he gave the will—he communicated the power. Again,

3. It is promised that these converts should be innumerable—yea, as the drops of early dew, and no less beautiful:—they indeed, endued with the graces of the Spirit, were ornaments of the sanctuary, yea, they were the living “polished stones,” of which the mystic temple is composed.

Psaln XLV. also (though perhaps not composed at this time) beautifully illustrates this subject of the conquests of the gospel, which differ from those of mortal heroes, in not being intended to enslave and impoverish mankind; but to make them free, rich, and happy. The passage I refer to is the following, which, however, part of it may be accommodated to king David, certainly refers, in its first and sublimest sense, to his greater Son and Lord.

“Thou art far more beautiful than the sons of
Adam:

Grace is poured into thy lips:

Wherefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

—Dr. DODD.

Gild

Gird thy sword upon (thy) thigh, O (most)
 mighty ;
 (Put on) thy glory and thy majesty.
 And in thy majesty ride prosperously,
 On thy word of truth †, meekness and righteouf-
 ness :
 Thy right hand shall teach thee terrors.
 Sharp are thine arrows,—peoples shall submit unto
 thee,
 In the heart of thine enemies shalt thou be king ‡.
 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever :
 The sceptre of thy kingdom is a sceptre of upright-
 ness.
 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity :
 Therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee
 with the oil of joy above thy companions.
 Myrrh, aloes, and cassia, (perfume) all thy gar-
 nements,
 Out of the ivory caskets § whereby they have re-
 freshed thee ||.”

Hence this described the Messiah himself, in all
 the graces of his person and mediatorial character,
 the following part of the psalm describes the church
 also in figurative language, and in terms equally

*—22. † *Veritas*. ‡ *Messias*. § *Kassia*.

§ *Myrrh, aloes, and cassia*, the spices used in the *Messiah*.

|| *Myrrh, aloes, and cassia*, the spices used in the *Messiah*—Myrrh,
 aloes, and cassia, the spices used in the *Messiah*—Myrrh, aloes,
 and cassia, the spices used in the *Messiah*—Myrrh, aloes, and
 cassia, the spices used in the *Messiah*.

beautiful and poetic. Her robe of righteousness, is wrought gold—her garment of sanctification is compared to needle work or embroidery, in which are interwoven all the graces of the Christian life.

We must now hasten to a scene in David's life, the most interesting as well as unhappy. Alas! how weak is human nature when left alone to struggle with temptation!

To view this matter in its true light, we must consider David's circumstances.

Kings are so much elevated above their subjects, that they are easily tempted to suppose they owe them no reciprocal duties; and there are never wanting flatterers to teach them that they are accountable to none but God. Nay, too often are they induced to consider their people as their property; so much so as their flocks and herds. When this is the case, it is no wonder that they sport with their lives, and make free with their possessions, as in the case of Naboth, Ahab, and his wicked mother Jezebel.

Samuel had, indeed, pre-described to the Israelites the future character of their kings, in terms which too well fitted the best of them on some occasions; and his prophetic language might possibly be perverted by some, as a licence for the enormities he portrays. A king of Israel was properly no more than the first magistrate of the land, and was bound to govern by the laws; but we know how easily this is

forgot by kings, and denied by the creatures of a court.

These remarks seem partly necessary to justify the credibility of this part of Sacred History; and to account for the insensibility with which David acts, and the tameness with which his servants obey his most cruel and iniquitous commands. An absolute monarchy implies all this and more. The doctrine of non-resistance and passive obedience, was enough to stifle the conscience of David—to render the officers of his court the panders of his lust—and, perhaps, even led *Bathsheba* herself to suppose, that her allegiance to her prince, superseded the duty of fidelity to her husband.

In such circumstances, however, one man was found who dared to reprove the baseness of the royal sinner. He represents his crime under a most beautiful parable, and having made him condemn his own conduct in the person of another, he makes the application, with the authority of one intrusted with a message from JEHOVAH—"Thou art the man!"—The monarch was thunder-struck. Conviction shot, like a beam of lightning, into his heart. Nathan doubtless saw his situation, and urged him to repentance. David submitted without any attempt to excuse or palliate his sin. "I have sinned (said he) against the LORD."—"And the LORD (rejoined the prophet) hath put away thy sin: thou shalt not die" for this offence, but the child of this adultery

I 2
shall.

shall *. Here was a gracious fulfilment of that promise to the Messiah; “If thy children forsake my law, I will visit their iniquities with stripes; nevertheless my loving kindness will I not take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail;.” This assurance of divine pardon, did not, however, lead him to think lightly of his sin, or defer his repentance. Rather, it seems, to have inspired that fine sentiment in Psalm cxxx. “There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared†.” All true fear of God must be founded on his forgiving mercy; but for the hope of this we might—indeed we *must*—*dread* him; but could not filially and reverentially fear him.

But the chief record and monument of David’s repentance, is the fifty-first psalm, which now demands our attentive review.

“Be gracious unto me, O God, according to thy
loving kindness;
According to the multitude of thy tender mercies,
blot out my transgressions;
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse
me from my sin;
For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is
continually before me.
BEFORE § thee, thee only have I sinned,
And done this evil in thy sight;

* 2 Sam. xii.

† Ps. lxxxix. 32.

† Ver. 4.

§ See *Park.* sense 16. The antithesis requires this translation.

There-

Therefore shalt thou be justified in thy sentence *,
And clear in thy judgment.

“ Behold, in iniquity was I BORN †,
Yea, in sin did my mother conceive ‡ me.
Behold ! thou desirest truth in the inward parts ‡,
And in the hidden part thou wilt make me to know
wisdom

Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean :
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

— — — — —
Create for me a clean heart, O God ;
And a SETTLED § spirit renew within me.
Cast me not away from thy presence ;
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.
Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation :
And support me a spirit of freedom ¶.”

This psalm exhibits the doctrine of divine influences, I think, in the strongest point of view ; and it is worthy of remark, that David (if I mistake not) is the first that compares the conversion of a sinner to a

* “ Be justified.” *2 Cor.* v. 21.

† “ I have conceived in iniquity, is to be born of sinful parents. See *John* ix. 34.

‡ *Col.* i. 10. *Rom.* viii. 22. *Eph.* i. 15. 16. *1 Pet.* iii. 4.

§ “ settled and calm,” i. e. “ settled, i. e. regulated and governed by the Holy Spirit, with the exactness of a well regulated machine.”

¶ Literally “ rest.” A voluntary spirit?—i. e. he prays, that he may be free from any other restraint of guilt and sin, and become a volunteer in God’s service. See above on *Pl. ex.*

new creation, and attributes that work entirely to the Holy Spirit.

Though this psalm by no means requires a comment to bring it to our purpose; yet I will beg leave to add Dr. *Hammond's* paraphrase on the tenth and eleventh verses—a writer by the way, never guilty of too much evangelizing the Old Testament. He makes the psalmist say—“ Lord, I have sadly fallen from my wonted purity and sincerity; Lord, by the *good work of thy grace* upon my heart, restore me to it again, and renew me inwardly and thoroughly, my very thoughts as well as my actions, that I never fall into the least beginning of any such pollution again.

“ Lord, it is just with thee to reject me from all *spiritual commerce and communication* with thee, who have resisted *thy Spirit*, and wasted my soul by so many wilful commissions against thee;—*just*, that thou shouldest withdraw thy *grace* to which I have done such despite. O do not thou thus severely punish me, by withdrawing that which now more than ever I stand in need of.”

The long train of calamities which followed David's fall, are a warning to us not to trifle with sin, might we be ever so cert in of forgiveness; among these, one of the severest was, the rebellion of his darling Absalom, during which time, several psalms are ascribed to him, which shew the frame of his mind to have been on the whole devout and pious. He certainly felt in the most pungent manner the pain-

painfulness of his situation; yet he bore it for the most part with the greatest fortitude and confidence in God: "Felt like a man, but like a Christian bore."

Among the psalms apparently written on this occasion, the eighty-fourth merits our peculiar attention, as evidently written during his banishment from Jerusalem and the Temple.

After a passionate admiration of God's tabernacle, he exclaims—

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee,
In whose heart are [thine] highways.
Passing through the valley of Baca*, they make a well;
Yea, the rain overfloweth the pools †.
They shall go from strength to strength ‡:
The God of Gods shall appear [to them] in Zion §."

Then the psalmist refines his first idea.

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.
I would choose to keep the threshold of my God,
Rather than to inhabit the tents of wickedness.

* Baca.—*Melancholy*, which may be in the poet's situation; according to some—*weeping*, to LXX. and others.

† I. e. refreshment.

‡ From strength to strength, in the mutual help, or from perseverance to perseverance.

§ Bishop *Heber*.

For the God, JEHOVAH, is a sun and shield ;
JEHOVAH will give grace and glory ;
And will not withhold good from those who walk
uprightly.

O JEHOVAH (God) of hosts, blessed is the man
who trusteth in thee !”

This beautiful, but difficult psalm, describes the character of an old-testament believer, as one who delighted in the house of God, because there he enjoyed communion with him—as one who preferred sitting on the threshold of the tabernacle, to a splendid residence in the tents of sinners.—The world to such, may be as the rugged and thirsty vale of Baca ; yet here faith will find resources in the fountain of mercy, and with joy shall they draw water from the wells of salvation : —or, if we prefer the other rendering, the *vale* of *tears* becomes a *valley* of blessings, when the believer, refreshed by the teachings of the Spirit (which some understand by the *rain*) is enabled to go on from strength to strength, till at the completion of his journey, he shall behold the face of God in Zion.

To such the Lord is both a sun and shield—to them he communicates both grace and glory :—grace to strengthen them in the way, and glory to crown them in the end. Well may the psalmist conclude—Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD !

During this trial, notwithstanding the comforts he
received,

received, the psalmist's sufferings must have been great, and one of the bitter ingredients in this cup of affliction, was the treatment he received from Shimei, who cursed him to his face*. David's followers would have readily revenged him on them, but he forbade them—"The Lord hath said unto him—curse David?"—i. e. the Lord hath permitted him thus to treat me, as a punishment for my rebellion against himself.

This article hath already so much exceeded its proportion, that I am precluded from introducing several events, with their corresponding psalms, that would not be impertinent to our design; there is one other psalm, however, which relates immediately to our purpose, and which I shall cite, though I cannot ascertain either the time or occasion of its composition: I mean the nineteenth.

The former part of this psalm relates to the glory of the material world. The *sun* is a bridegroom coming forth from his chamber—a champion, rejoicing to run a race—his rays extend through the earth, and nothing is precluded from his beams. The second part of the psalm is commonly considered as distinct, and irrelative to the former; but receives a beautiful illustration from considering them as related thus:

The various terms law, precept, &c. are generally expressions which refer to divine revelation, and are,

* 2 Sam. xvi. 7.

a. least, as applicable to the new dispensation as to the old. Gospel truth, then, may be considered as a sun, whose beams extend through the earth, and illumine every climate, and its effects are no less beneficent and important. Doth the sun subdue the torpidity of winter, and animate a dead creation?—the doctrine of **JEHOVAH** is pure and perfect, restores and converts the soul, dead in trespasses and sins.—Doth the sun dissipate the clouds, and pour light and glory all around us? the testimony of the Gospel instructs the simple, and illuminates mankind. Is the light sweet, and is it pleasant to behold the sun?—the precepts of the new covenant rejoice the heart.—This view of the psalm, if just, fully accounts for St. Paul's application of it to the propagation of the gospel*.

But to return to David—He was now declining apace to his latter end; but ambition had not yet forsook his bosom. To be the king of a great and prosperous nation, was not enough, without knowing how powerful and numerous that nation was. The demon of pride excited him to number the people; nor could the remonstrances of Joab and his other officers divert him. At the same time, however, he seems to have forgot the appointed offering to God upon such occasions†. We justly blame him for this; but ourselves are generally the more forgetful of our obligations to Providence, in proportion as

* Rom. x. 18.

† See Exod. xxx. 12—16.

those obligations are encreased. Afflictions raise our gratitude—prosperity depresses it. David sinned—was reprov'd, humbled, and punished in the way most corresponding to his crimes; namely, by a reduction of his people.

I shall now only sketch very slightly the character of our hero. This has indeed been often done, and he has been variously represented as the best and the worst of men, according as his portrait has been drawn by friends or enemies; and the whole, which has been remarked by both, may be reduced to three words—he was a man of great abilities, great virtues, and great failings.

Let us consider him in the various characters he sustained—

1. He was a *warrior*; and it is not wonderful that those who study the arts of human slaughter, should sometimes be deaf to the soft cries of humanity. Our hero, however, was certainly capable of the finest sentiments of friendship, and the strongest paternal feelings, as in the instances of Jonathan and Abishai. And his treatment of Shai, demonstrates that he knew how to be generous to an enemy.

2. This warrior was a *king*, and we have already remarked how much kings are exposed to flatterers and flattery. Add to this the temptations which power and riches constantly bring with them. Yet it does not appear that he was an oppressor of the people upon the whole. On the contrary, when they were

were afflicted with a pestilence for his sin in numbering them, what a fine portrait have we of a father of his people weeping over them.—“ These sheep, what have they done * ? ”—Contrast this with the conduct of Nero while Rome was burning.

3. The king was also a *prophet*, and no other prophet before Isaiah so clearly predicted the blessings of Christianity. But prophets are sometimes commissioned to denounce judgments and curses; and this accounts for several passages, which have been thought to breathe the spirit of private revenge; but are in reality predictions of the ruin of Messiah’s enemies.

4. The royal soldier and prophet appears in a still greater character, that of a good man, a believer, or, if you please, a *Christian*, “ the highest style of man.” But like other good men, he possessed and acknowledged a depraved nature, a corrupted heart, and “ every one that knoweth the plague of his own heart,” will know how to account for many things otherwise unaccountable.

But that which seems principally to recommend his character above all the rest, is a certain honest and simple zeal in the cause of God and religion; and this, I conceive, is principally intended in the eulogy he received from the mouth of God himself, who calls him “ a man after his own heart”—i. e. a man who sincerely loved JEHOVAH, and heartily meant his service in the general tenor of his conduct—however

* 2 Sam. xlv. 17.

temptations might draw, and innate depravity betray him into vices, which, in his better hours, he detested and abhorred. And such a character, I conceive, far preferable to many others, more strict and unexceptionable indeed before men; but comparatively cold and heartless in the service of the Most High.

“The leading sin in David’s character, seems to have been *fury*, which we apprehend to be the exact import of that expression, [1 Sam. xiii. 14.] ‘A man after God’s own heart,’ i. e. a man eminently devoted to God, and full of zeal for his glory. And it is observable, that, notwithstanding his many and great sins (and far be it from us to estimate that many and great they were) he never appears to have countenanced idolatry, the besetting sin of Israel. The book of Psalms, which was written at many different times, and in a great variety of circumstances, evinces a mind conversant with the divine attributes, and much engaged in contemplation on the blessings of the covenant of redemption, and the glories of the Messiah, of whom he was both a type and ancestor.”

Edinburgh on Redemp. Lond. Edit. with Notes. p. 220. Note M.

CHAP. IV.

INSTANCES OF EXPERIMENTAL RELIGION FROM
SOLOMON TO THE END OF THE OLD TESTA-
MENT.

S O L O M O N.

Born B. C. 1033.—Died 975.

THIS prince is undoubtedly another of the most interesting and extraordinary characters in the Bible.

His early piety, miserable declension, and happy recovery, each afford lessons of the most important instruction.

His early piety is unquestionable; he was called *Jedidiah*, the beloved of the Lord. When in the beginning of his reign, he dedicated the temple he had built, how sublime the devotion with which he addressed the throne of grace! how beautiful the piety with which he blessed the people.—“Jehovah our God, be with us, as he was with our fathers!—Let him not leave us, nor forsake us! That he may INCLINE our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments! †”

* 2 Sam. xii. 25.

† 1 Kings viii. 57, 58.

The book of Proverbs seems to have been partly written by Solomon himself, in his earliest and best years, and partly collected by those who attended on his person, or enjoyed his conversation. There are several passages which imply the doctrine of divine influences, but I take this to be inculcated at large in the sublime allegory in the eighth and ninth chapters. By *wisdom* I understand *piety* personified, which I suppose is the general sense of that term in the Old Testament, where also *folly* intends *wickedness*. The wisdom here designed, is not philosophy, nor natural science, which is of the earth; but that saving knowledge which is from on high. She is described as inhabiting the eternal mansions, as the companion and delight of Deity, as attended by Counsel, Prudence, Understanding, Strength; as directing the great in the way of happiness, and enriching the poor with her treasures; as making a feast of fat things, and inviting the needy and the stranger to it.

I know that evangelical expositors generally apply these passages to the Son of God himself, as did some of the Fathers; and it is not unlikely that the apostle John had some allusion to them in the opening of his gospel: but the nature of the Eastern allegories, and a comparison with many other passages of scripture, incline me to take the former for the primary sense, and the other for an accommodation, though a very beautiful and proper one.

In the early part of his life, that is, before his de-

clension, I conceive he also wrote the SONG, or poem, which bears his name, and on which I beg leave to offer a few remarks, previous to introducing some quotations from it.

The divine authority of this book, as of some others, rests in great measure upon its early and universal reception in the Jewish and Christian churches, in both which it has been received as an inspired work from the first formation of the Canon*: and so far were the antient Jews from rejecting it as a loose and carnal poem, as some late writers have ventured to pronounce it, that they called it the Holy of Holies, and, from the mysteries they supposed it to contain, forbade the reading of it to their youth before the age of thirty.

The occasion of it was doubtless some marriage, and probably that of Solomon with Pharaoh's daughter, as generally supposed. The form is certainly dramatic—several speakers are introduced—the scenes are often shifted—and the whole is written in Hebrew verse.

The nature and design of this song has been much disputed; some moderns have supposed it nothing more than an encomium on chaste matrimonial love; but the generality of interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, antient and modern, have considered it as a sacred allegory, designed to represent the relation and affection subsisting between the Lord and his

* See Bishop *Cotes* on the canon.

Church: and that this is a just view of it, I think there can be little doubt with those who consider how often the same sort of images, and many of the very same, are applied in that view in different parts of the Psalms, the Prophets, and the New Testament*.

But though I think interpreters have been thus far right in considering the whole as an allegory, I confess, I think they have generally been very unhappy in the application of particular portions of it. This may be partly owing to their inattention to its plan, as a dramatic poem; partly to the great obscurity attending many of the images; but chiefly, I think, to the explaining it verse by verse. Thus shred- ing it into piece-meal destroys its beauty as a whole: the parts lose their connexion and proportion; and an attempt to say something new upon each member of the verse has led expositors into a thousand extravagancies and absurdities. Since, however, the literal meaning of this song has been so accurately investigated by the labours of a *Lorch*, a *Michaelis*, a *Harmer*, and other of the first Hebrew critics, there is better hope of succeeding in a modest attempt to make a spiritual application of the allegory.

In the present work I can only quote a single passage or two.—At the 3d verse and following of the second chapter, the spouse is relating to her virgins, the pleasure, the satisfaction, and security she found in the company of her beloved: the tenderness,

* See the passages referred to in the margin of our Bible.

affection, and generosity with which he had entertained her in a choise, or arbor in the gardens, where she supposes him still at rest, as is the custom in those warm countries, during the heat of mid-day.

“ As the citron-tree * among the trees of the wood,
 So is my beloved among the youths.
 In his shade I delighted, and sat down;
 And his fruit was sweet unto my taste.
 He brought me into the house of wine †,
 And his banner over me [was] Love.
 Support me [said I] with refreshments ‡,
 Strew citrons round me,
 For I am sick of love.
 His left hand [was] under my head,
 And his right hand embraced me.”

There is no difficulty in allegorizing these verses. Many of my readers, I hope, can recollect a period to which they may be applied: a time when all the passions were fired with devotion, and their religious impressions nothing less than extacy and rapture. Such frames are not to be considered as the highest attainments in religion, yet the lots of them cannot

* See *Psalms* in *Ps.*

† “ Wine-cellar” *Mt. Psalms*.

‡ “ Refreshments;” Mr. *Parkhurst* thinks, “ collationaries;” undoubtedly *not* flaggons.

be reflected on without regret; and often inspires the language of holy *Job*—"O that it were with me as in months past!"

The following part of this chapter seems intended to describe the introduction of the gospel dispensation, under the image of returning spring; but I must forbear, or I shall write a comment. Suffice it to observe, that the book proceeds in the same kind of imagery, with frequent and abrupt changes both of the characters and scenery, till we come to the latter part of the fourth chapter, where the spouse, that is, the church, is compared to an enclosed and well-cultivated garden. The last verse is commonly explained as a pathetic invocation of the Holy Spirit, constantly compared to air or wind in the scriptures; but I rather conceive (if our printed copies are right*) that the verse should be divided; first the bridegroom invoking the heavenly gales—

"Awake, O north-wind! and come, O south!
Blow upon MY garden, that its spices may flow
out!"

Then the spouse immediately subjoins,

"Let my beloved come into HIS garden,
And eat his pleasant fruits."

* Some MSS. read "MY garden," in the last member of the verse, &c. I suspect their authority.

There is a beauty, if I mistake not, in thus dividing the veise, as it preserves to the bridegroom the sole property of his garden. He says, "MY garden;" and she cheerfully acknowledges his claim—"Yes, says she, I am HIS garden—yet I bear no fruits of good works, I exhale none of the odours of a holy conversation, but as the Holy Spirit actuates my heart and life."—This is coming exactly to the grand point I am writing to support.

But to proceed with Solomon.—It is a most unpleasant task to record the vices of good men: but the sacred penmen shew their impartiality in recording them with historic fidelity. It cannot be denied, and it ought not be dissimbled, that Solomon in his subsequent conduct shewed at once the frailty of human nature, and the danger of worldly splendour.

Endowed with an extraordinary capacity, he soared into the sublimest speculations, which not being duly sanctified by prayer, led him *from* God, instead of *to* him.

With a vain up-lifted heart he looked on neighbouring princes, envied and emulated their splendour, and ran into most of their excesses, til it pleased God, in consequence of his faithful promise (made to David his father *) to bring him back again; and, by restoring to him his good Spirit, en-

* "If his children forsake my law—Then will I visit their transgressions with a rod---Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from them," &c. Psalm lxxxix. 3 ---33.

abled him to write the book of ECCLESIASTES, as a history of his own experience, and a warning to future ages.

I must here close this article; and it is with no small regret that I must now pass over a number of very illustrious characters, in order to keep as near as may be to my proposed bounds. Were it not for this necessity, I should dilate with pleasure on the integrity of Hezekiah, the early piety of Josiah, and the conversion of Manasse, with many others: but I must content myself with citing only a few of the prophets who have written more expressly on the subject of divine influences, and experimental godliness.

I S A I A H.

Prophecied B. C. from about 760 to 710.

It is easy for princes to lead their people into vice, but not so easy to bring them back again. Those that sinned with Solomon did not, generally, repent with him: but the declension now began, proceeded in the following reigns with a progression natural to a course of evil. The goodness of God, however, still did not forsake them; but he continued among them a race of prophets, “rising up early and sending them.” These, in themselves experiencing the
grace

grace of God, taught it to others, at the same time predicting a more extraordinary effusion of the Spirit in gospel times. One of the most eminent of these was Isaiah, and the first we particularly notice.

Isaiah was of the blood royal, and probably educated in the court. This I mention not to reflect a dignity upon his character; but as another instance, to shew that religion is possible even in a palace.

It may also account for the peculiar elegance of this prophet's style. Isaiah bears the same rank among the Hebrew prophets that Homer does among the Greek poets, Virgil among the Latin, or Milton among our own. Every thing in him is beautiful or magnificent, though with propriety; but what is most valuable is the evangelical truth he delivers relative to the Messiah and his kingdom, and on account of which he has been called the evangelic prophet.

There are many passages which describe these communications of the Spirit with which the Gospel was first promulged, with which it is still accompanied, and shall be with increasing glory in the latter days. I shall present the reader with only one beautiful extract.

In many passages of this prophet the effusion of the Spirit is compared to that of water—rain—floods—rivers; and its effects also to that of water upon the earth and vegetable creation.—The following is one of the most striking, from the beginning of chapter xlv.

“ Fear

“ Fear not, O Jacob, my servant,
 And thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen;
 For I will pour water upon the thirsty,
 And floods upon the dry ground:
 I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed,
 And my blessing upon thine offspring:
 And they shall spring up as * grass,
 As willows by the water-courses.
 One shall say I am JEHOVAH's,
 And another shall be called by the name of Jacob;
 And this shall inscribe his hand † unto JEHOVAH,
 And shall be surnamed by the name of Israel ‡.”

H O S E A.

Prophefied B. C. from about 785 to 725.

Amos, Hosea, and Joel, were all in some measure contemporary with Isaiah, and might all with propriety be summoned in our cause; but brevity induces me omit the first and third, and make but a single quotation from the second.

The concluding chapter of Hosea (chap. xiv.) is extremely fine.—It represents the language of a returning penitent, and then of a forgiving God.

* So 10 MSS. and 2 Editions. Bishop *Lectures*.

† That is, make a mark upon his hand. See Rev. xx. 4. Bishop *Exe.*

‡ Ver. 1-5

“ O Israel, return unto JEHOVAH thy God,
 For thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.
 Take with you words, and return unto JEHOVAH.
 Say unto him—
 “ Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously,
 “ And we will render unto thee the calves * of our
 lips.”

.

Then saith JEHOVAH :
 “ I will heal their backsliding ; I will love them
 freely ;
 For mine anger is turned away from them.
 I will be as the dew unto Israel ;
 He shall blossom as the lily, and strike forth his
 roots as Lebanon.
 His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as
 the olive tree,
 And his smell as Lebanon.—
 They shall return and sit under his shade † ;
 They shall revive [as] the corn, and grow as the
 vine :
 And their scent shall be as the vine of Lebanon.
 Ephraim (shall say)
 “ What have I to do with idols ? ”
 I have heard and observed him :
 I am like a green fir-tree ;
 From me is thy fruit found.”

* That is, Sacrifices ; the ancient Versions read “ Fruit.” So
 Heb. xiii. 15.

† So Sept. &c.

In these verses the Spirit of grace is compared to dew—to the copious dew of the eastern countries; and the effects of it, are fruitfulness and verdure.

Dr. *Parker*, the oracle of his day for eastern learning, says *, there are “two respects in which the *fruit given* from God may be taken, for either that which is from him *to* us, or from him *in* us; [which] are so necessarily joined, that as the expression may denote both, so we cannot but understand and take in both together. Among the chief of such fruit as we receive from him, being power and grace to enable us to be fruitful in good, and bring forth fruit acceptable to him; as those that are in him shall in him find all good things for the n, so will they also be enabled by him to do such things as are good and pleasing to him.”



J E R E M I A H.

Prophecied from about 629 to 588 B. C.

This pathetic writer prophesied about 70 years after Hnah. He was a priest of the tribe of Benjamin, was called very early to the prophetic office, and exercised it more than forty years.

* *Idem*.

This prophet also introduces Ephraim in the character of a true penitent :

“ I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself
[thus:]

“ Thou hast chastised me, and I am chastised, as
an untrained bullock :

Turn thou me [said I] and I shall be turned ;

For thou, JEHOVAH, [art] my God.

Surely after that I was turned, I repented ;

And after that I was instructed, I smote upon the
thigh :

I was ashamed, yea even confounded,

Because I did bear the reproach of my youth *.”

The prophet, in several passages, relates the nature of the new covenant, in terms perfectly harmonious with the above sentiment—thus, particularly, chapter xxxii.

“ And I will give them one heart and one way,

That they may fear me all [their] days † ;

For the good of them and of their children after
them.

And I will make an everlasting covenant with
them,

That I will not turn away from [following] after
them to do them good ;

* Jer. xxxi. 18, 19

† Eng. Marg.

But I will put my fear in their hearts,
That they shall not depart from me *."

The sense of the last verse, if I have not mistaken it, is peculiarly encouraging. Alas ! how apt are the Lord's people to decline from his holy ways, like disobedient children straying from their parents ; but then he graciously pursues them—watches them in all their wanderings, and brings them back again, lest they should finally forsake him.



E Z E K I E L.

Prophecied from about 595 to 574 B. C.

This prophet was a captive ; and he entered upon his prophetic office above eight years before Jeremiah finished his. Thus the Lord provides a succession of ministers for his church.

Ezekiel describes the blessings of the new covenant, nearly in the same terms with Jeremiah :

“ Then will I sprinkle upon you pure water,
And ye shall be purified from all your filthiness,
And from all your idols will I cleanse you :
A new heart also will I give you,
And a new spirit will I put within you ;
And I will take away the stony heart out of your
flesh,

* Jer. xxxii. 39, 40.

And I will give you an heart of flesh,
 And I will put my Spirit within you,
 And cause you to walk in my statutes,
 And my judgments ye shall keep and do *."

The vision of the *holy waters* issuing out of the Temple, in chapter xlvii. exhibits, according to Dr. Smith †, and the best commentators, "an emblem of the POWER of God's GRACE under the Gospel, encreasing and overflowing till it fills the earth with the knowledge and glory of God; and heals all the depravity and miseries of mankind."

Z E C H A R I A H.

Prophecied about 520 B. C.

This was another of the captive prophets. His style is rather prosaic in the former part of the book, being chiefly occupied in relating the visions he saw; but in the latter part, poetical and sublime.

Not to insist upon the vision of "the golden candlestick," or rather *chandelier*, in chap. iv. though much to our purpose, I shall only quote a passage from the twelfth chapter, which began to be fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, and has received a partial ac-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

† Summary view of the prophets, by Dr. J. Smith of Carleton, p. 154—a valuable little work.

complishment in many thousand instances since that period; but is, we hope, to receive a still more glorious fulfilment, in the final conversion of the Jews.

“ And I will pour upon the house of David, and
upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem,
The spirit of grace and of supplications :
And they shall look unto HIM * whom they have
pierced,
And they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for
an only [child] :
And they shall be in bitterness for him, as one is in
bitterness for a first-born †.”

In this passage, according to Dr. *Smith*, the prophet describes “ the spiritual mercies of God in converting his people ; and gives a very pathetic and affecting account of the deep sorrow of that people, when brought to a sense of their great sin in crucifying the Messiah—a deep retired sorrow, which will render the mourners for a season insensible to all the comforts and enjoyments of the most endearing society †.”

* See some M.S. and P¹. Versions. See John xix. 37.

† Zech. xiv. 10.

† Summary View, p. 214.

N E H E M I A H.

Flourished about 440 B. C.

Nehemiah was cup-bearer to the king of Persia, an office, it should seem, of considerable influence and dignity.

He was also one of them that sighed and cried for the iniquities of the people. He confesses, that the Lord had put into his heart that good desire which he had to rebuild the house of the Lord * ; as Ezra had attributed to him also the good will which Cyrus had expressed toward this work †. So are we taught to attribute even all our good dispositions to the Lord.

He appears to have been not only a man of great integrity, but of spirit and generosity, and spared no expence—not of the public money, but of his own private property, to promote the cause of God ‡.

The manner in which the Law was read by Ezra, and heard by the people, shews that “the word of the Lord was precious in those days;” and exemplifies that fine expression of the prophet, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them §:”—so did they, and esteemed them “more than their necessary food.”

The confession of the priests in the ninth chapter, which was probably drawn up by Ezra, yields to no-

* Neh. i. 12.

† Ezra vi. 27.

‡ Ch. vii. 15---19.

§ Jer. xv. 16.

thing in the sacred volume, for reverence, piety, and sobriety. That noble renunciation of the worship of the heavenly host, who are all represented as worshipping JEHOVAH, was peculiarly bold and striking in their present circumstances, and under a government that worshipped that heavenly host, as was notoriously the case in Persia.~ But what is most observably to our purpose, is his confession, in the following declaration—"Thou gavest them also thy good SPIRIT, to instruct them *."—A sentiment often repeated in the Old Testament, as well as in the New.

There is one thing, which I shall mention, as it may seem inconsistent with other parts of this great character, and prove a stumbling-block to weak minds; namely, that Nehemiah seems to plead a reward for his good works before God—thus (chap. xiii. 14.) "Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done;" &c. On which I would observe, 1. that these GOOD DEEDS are in the original properly "good works,"—not only acts of goodness and benevolence, but proceeding from the grace and mercy which he had experienced;—and 2. That though he had confessedly a view to the recompence of reward, as Moses, and a greater than Moses had;—yet the reward he expected was a reward not of debt, but of grace—"Remember me, O my God [concerning]

* Neh. ix. 25.

† Gen. xxi.

† Heb. xi. 26. xli. 2.

this also, and spare me according to THE GREATNESS OF THY MERCY." This observation may be extended to some similar expressions of David, Hezekiah, and others. We may certainly, without trusting to our own righteousnesses, warrantably hope, that the little services we are enabled to do for God and his cause, will not be forgotten, when every cup of cold water given to his disciples shall be rewarded *.

A P P E N D I X

TO

C H A P. IV.

FARTHER INSTANCES OF JEWISH PIETY FROM
THE APOCRYPHA AND RABBINS.

As there is a considerable vacancy between the times of the Old Testament and the New, we shall slightly inquire what might be the sentiments of the more pious Jews during that period; which we shall

* Matt. x. 42.

be enabled to do, partly from the books called *Apocryphal*, and partly from some ancient testimonies preserved among the rabbinical writers.

Before I quote the Apocrypha, I shall just premise, that I quote none of these books as sacred scripture, but as human writings, of great antiquity, and (such as I shall quote) of considerable value.

WISDOM.

I do not suppose the book of *Wisdom* to be the genuine work of Solomon, although it might be probably compiled in a great measure from his sayings, traditionally handed down, or preserved in the private writings of some religious scribes. This book has been ascribed to *Philos*, and perhaps he might put the finishing hand to it, and leave it in its present form.

The book begins with a general exhortation to wisdom and righteousness. "Love righteousness," (saith this writer) "for the HOLY SPIRIT of discipline will flee deceit, and remove from thoughts that are without understanding, and is reproved * when unrighteousness cometh in †."

In a following chapter, he asserts—"They that put their trust in him (i. e. the Lord) shall understand the truth; and such as be faithful, shall abide with him in love: for grace and mercy is to his saint, and he hath care for his elect ‡."—And in a subsequent

* Eng. Marg.---Perhaps *deceit* is the more proper reading.

† *Philos* may perhaps have written, "the HOLY SPIRIT of discipline will flee from deceit."

‡ Ch. i. c. 1. v. 5. § Ch. i. c. 1. v. 14.

verse of the same chapter *, he speaks of some to whom shall be given “the special gift [or CHOSEN GRACE †] of faith, and an inheritance in the temple of the Lord.”

The eulogy on *Wisdom*, chap. vii. seems to be composed in imitation of that of Solomon in the book of Proverbs, and is very much in the style of Philo's undoubted compositions. Of this *wisdom*, piety, and grace, he says—“she maketh all things new, and entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God and prophets ‡.”

ECCLESIASTICUS,

Of the wisdom of *Jesus* the son of *Sirach*, who is supposed to have lived about two centuries before Christianity. This book seems much of the same nature with the former, and is a collection of the sayings of their wise men. The following passage is one of the most pertinent to our design. Of the good man he says—

“Blessed is he that shall be exercised in these things; and he that layeth them up in his heart, shall become wise,—for if he do them, he shall be strong to all things; for the LIGHT of the Lord leadeth him, who giveth wisdom to the godly §.”

* Ver. 14. † τὴν χάριν ἢ ἀφ' ἧς ἐκλεγχέται.

‡ Ver. 27. § Chap. ix. 28, 29. See also chap. xxxix. 5, 6.

JEWISH LITURGY.

Among the Jewish forms of prayer, supposed to be older than Christianity, is the following :

“ Thou of thy mercy givest knowledge unto men, teachest them understanding; give graciously unto us knowledge, wisdom, and understanding. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who graciously givest knowledge unto men!”——“ Bring us back, O our Father, to the observance of thy Law, and make us adhere to thy precepts; and do thou, O our King, draw us near to thy worship, and convert us unto thee by perfect repentance in thy presence *.”——

PHILO.

Philo Judæus, (already named as the author of the Book of Wisdom) was a philosophic Jew of Alexandria, at the time Jesus Christ was upon earth, and died, if Dr. Cave be right, in A. D. 30†. By mixing Judaism with the Platonic philosophy, he formed a kind of mystical theology, which, after it had been again refined by some of the Christian fathers, became the doctrine of the school. Philo, however enigmatical in many things, is sufficiently clear and express as to the doctrine of divine influences, of which the following passage, instead of

* Quoted *Perizonæ*’s *Connect.* Part II. book 6.

† *Cave’s Hist. Liter.*

many others that might have been selected, is sufficient evidence. “As (saith he) when the sun rises, the darkness is dissipated, and all things are filled with light: so when the sun, made by God, arises and enlightens the soul, the darkness of vice and passion is dispelled, and a most pure and amiable form of most shining virtue appears.”

Agreeable to this idea, the same Philo, in his account of the contemplative part of the Essenes, a sect who affected extraordinary piety among the Jews, observes that, “Their constant usage is to pray twice every day; that is, in the morning and in the evening. At the rising of the sun, they pray that God would give his blessing upon the day, that true blessing, whereby their minds may be filled with *heavenly light*: and at the setting of the sun, that their mind, being wholly disburdened of all sensible things, may in its retirements into itself find out truth*.”

RABBINS.

The modern Jews perceiving the doctrine of divine influences, to be an essential branch of Christianity, call the Holy Spirit the CHRISTIAN'S SANCTIFIER †, and as they have long been strangers to his influences, have therefore, very consistently, renounced his guidance.

* *Phil. de vita contemp.*---Quoted *Pridmore's Conn.* Part II. book 5.

† Dr. *Johnson* on the Jews of Barbary.

There are many passages, however, in their ancient rabbins, which preserve the remembrance of this truth; and though, perhaps, none of them may be so old as the times we are upon, yet to avoid recurring to them again, I shall beg leave to subjoin a few in this place.

We shall begin with *original sin*—the ground of the necessity of divine influences.—An ancient rabbinical commentator on Genesis, asserts, that the “evil imagination” is put into man’s heart, “from the hour that he is formed *.” So *Manassés Ben Israel*, from David’s confession, (Ps. li.) infers that “all the human race are sinful, by original sin, before they are introduced into the world †.”

Again, rabbi *Menachem* acknowledges also the imputation of Adam’s sin to his posterity—“When he [i. e. Adam] sinned (saith he) the whole world sinned, whose sin we bear and suffer, which is not so of the sin of his posterity ‡.”

Consistently with this state of human nature, they admitted the necessity of regeneration; whence the propriety of our Lord’s question to Nicodemus, “Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?” which he could not have been expected to understand, had no such idea obtained among the

* *Bereshith Rabbah*. Quoted Poli Syn. in Gen. viii. 21.

† Quoted Poli Syn. in Ps. li.

‡ Quoted by *Owen* on the Hebrews, Vol. I. From Luc. Cypell. --- See more quotations in *Edwards* on original sin, p. 426.

Jewish masters. The *Cabalistic* Jews, according to Dr. J. Owen *, say, " That the instant a man is made a profelyte of righteousness, there comes a new soul into him from heaven, his old pagan soul vanishing, or being taken away." Which is confirmed by the assertion of *Maimonides* (not more than about 500 years ago) that " A Gentile who is become a profelyte, and a servant made free ; behold he is as a child which is new born †."

We have already observed, that a very ancient rabbin explains the pouring water at the feast of tabernacles, as emblematical of the effusion of the Spirit in the times of the Messiah ‡, though the modern Jews give a different account of it.

* On the Spirit, p. 180.

† In *Ifura Biah* per ׀ Quoted Skepp's *Div. Energy*, p. 170.

‡ See above, p. 16.

C H A P V.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS, AND EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS.

THE doctrines of JESUS CHRIST have been already enquired into, and I hope the reader is satisfied with the evidence above produced, that he taught the principles I am endeavouring to support. In farther confirmation, however, I beg attention to a few simple facts, relative to the first propagation of the gospel, which are supported with the authority of inspiration, and pertinent to our subject.

I. I observe that the *characters* of the first converts, both of our Lord and his apostles, were such as could not have been expected on any other principles than those of sovereign and efficacious grace. Those of Jesus Christ were not, generally, Scribes and Pharisees, who were prepared to receive his gospel by a deep acquaintance with the sacred scriptures, or a long practice of the moral virtues. On the contrary, some of his disciples “were ignorant and illiterate men,” common fishermen, engaged in that low and laborious calling, to procure a livelihood; and

some of whom who do not appear to have had even the curiosity to hear the Saviour before they were called to follow him. So truly might he say, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

Others of his converts were of loose and abandoned characters, as *publicans*, or rather custom-house officers, proverbial for oppression and covetousness, and whose whole enjoyment seems to have consisted in eating and drinking, since we seldom hear of them but at a feast: and among the women, some of his followers were public *harlots*, open and avowed prostitutes, before conversion *. Yea, such were some, the most eminent of his disciples; those who "loved much," were those to whom "much had been forgiven."

2. The *cause* of their conversion was not the eloquence with which our Lord spake, nor the miracles he wrought, (since then surely all must have believed) but as himself assures us, the secret drawing and teaching of the Father †. To others he said—"Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep ‡." His eloquence, indeed, sometimes disarmed the rage of his enemies, and the fame of his miracles drew the gaping multitude together; but the effects in both cases were slight and transient: and in the latter it is particularly observable, as himself assures us, that the principal circumstance which attracted them, was the personal advantage they received; and that of the

* Matt. xxi. 31.

† John vi. 44, 45. 65.

‡ John x. 26.

lowest kind,—they did eat of the loaves and fishes, and were filled *.

3. The same remarks may be extended to the *followers* of the *apostles*. Their first converts to Christianity, were as little prepared as the preceding. They were not moral philosophers and earnest enquirers after truth and virtue: but either, like *Lydia*, who was immersed in business when the Lord opened her heart: or like the *Sailor*, hardened against religion by profession, till his heart was broken by the earthquake. The instance of Saul will be considered presently.—Of the generality of converts from heathenism, it appears that they had been abandoned to the grossest ignorance, and the most execrable vices †.

4. If the eloquence and miracles of the Son of God himself, did not convince or convert his followers, much less did those of the apostles. We have said they were simple and illiterate men. Paul was indeed an exception, as to literature; but so careful was he, lest any part of his success should be attributed to his personal acquirements, that he refused to employ the advantages he possessed from that source, and resolved to know nothing among the most polite audiences, but the despised truth of a “Christ crucified ‡;” lest their faith should rest rather on human authority than the power of God §. Then as to elocution and personal address, he glories in acknow-

* John vi. 26. † Ephes. ii. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 2. § 2 Cor. x. 10.

hedging that he was “in bodily presence weak, and in speech contemptible*.”

I know it has been said, that their extraordinary success is to be ascribed to the miraculous powers with which they were endowed. That miracles fixed the attention of their hearers, and convinced them that they acted under a divine commission, is readily granted: but we have a striking instance of the transient effect of these, in the treatment of Paul and Barnabas at Lystra: where they were alternately considered as divinities and malefactors †: whereas, when the word was accompanied with a divine power to the heart, with few or no miracles, the effects were permanent, and the subjects of them gathered into churches.

5. In several instances of numerous or extraordinary conversions, there were some other circumstances pertinent to our argument.

Thus at the day of Pentecost, it is observable, that though the people were all witnesses of the extraordinary manner in which the apostles and their company were endowed with the gift of languages; yet this appears to have produced no better effect than a mere astonishment: nay, some mocked them as drunken with new wine. But when Peter had preached Jesus unto them from the scriptures—“*then* they were PIERCED ‡ to the heart, and said unto Peter, and the other apostles, men, brethren, what shall we do §?”

* 2 Cor. x. 10. † Acts xiv. 12, 19. ‡ Diddridge. § Acts ii. 37.

So that not the miracle they saw, but the simple preaching of Christ crucified, was the mean of their conversion.

So again, when Peter and John cured the lame man in the Temple, in the name of Jesus, the people "greatly wondered *," but it is not said they were converted till after Peter had preached a very faithful and searching sermon;—then about 5000 believed. I do not mean, however, from these instances, to infer that miracles were never used as means of conversion, but that more commonly they were only used to excite the attention of the hearers to the word of God, the more constant and sovereign mean. I might add many other instances to prove this: but I rather remark

6. That the sacred historian, St. Luke, attributes the conversion of sinners exclusively to divine grace. So we read that when Paul and Barnabas preached unto the Gentiles at Iconium, "they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed †." If this translation be admitted, there can be no dispute of the cause of their conversion. But as there is much controversy as to the import of the original ‡, I am not wil-

* ACTS II.

† CH. XIII. 42.

‡ *Τέρας καί σημεῖον*, which I do not like to be a literary term, properly signifies a miracle, as *Signum* in *Homæliæ I. c. lxxij.* and *Barlaam. c. l.* In other views, with which I do not entertain of Phil. c. 3. "they were converted shall admire thee, O thou heavenly king." CH. c. lxxij. p. 183. ling

ling to rest my argument on a doubtful criticism. Admitting therefore it should be rendered “As many as were DISPOSED for eternal life believed—or “they believed, as many as were DISPOSED, unto eternal life”—still let the reader remember that the “preparations or disposings *” of the heart in man—are from the Lord—he prepares the heart to pray, and then inclines his ear to hearken †. So that this text, in every reasonable interpretation, must either refer the work of conversion to the predestinating love of God; or, which is equally to our purpose, to his preparing, disposing grace, which opens the sinner’s heart, as it did Lydia’s, to receive the gospel with simplicity, affection, and reliance.

Having premised these remarks, we shall now select from the New Testament, three illustrious instances, of the power of experimental religion, namely—*Peter, John, and Paul.*

ST. P E T E R.

Called A. D. 30. Crucified about 66.

Peter shall lead the van.—“The character of Peter is marked with admirable propriety and consist-

* Prov. xvi. 1. כִּי-יָדְךָ הוֹדָה לַיהוָה. This also is a military term, exactly answerable to the preceding, and implies that the Lord arranges, and disposes the imagination, passions, and affections of the human heart, and particularly the hearts of his people, as a skilful general arrays his army for the battle. Comp. *Parkhurst* in גִּי. † Psalm x. 17.

ence by the evangelists ; he every where appears like himself. Earnestly devoted to his master's person, and breathing an honest warmth for his service, he was in a manner, the eye, the hand, the mouth of the apostles. He was the first to ask, to answer, to propose, and to execute. He made a noble confession, for which our Lord honoured him with a peculiar commendation. He waited but for a command to walk to him upon the water. He was not afraid to expose himself in his Lord's defence, when he was surrounded and apprehended by his enemies. And though, in this last instance, his affection was ill-expressed, yet his motive was undoubtedly praise-worthy. His heart flamed with zeal and love, and therefore he was always forward to distinguish himself.

“ But the warmth of Peter's temper often betrayed him into great difficulties, and shewed that the grace he had received, was consistent with many imperfections. Though he sincerely loved Christ, and had forsaken all for him, he was, at one time, so ignorant of the true design of his incarnation, that he was angry and impatient to hear him speak of his sufferings, and brought upon himself a most severe rebuke. Not content with the ordinary services allotted to him, he offered himself to unnecessary trials, as in the above instance, when he pressed to walk upon the water.

The event shewed him his own weakness and insufficiency, yet his self-confidence revived and continued. When our Lord warned him again and again of

h.

his approaching fall, he thought, and boldly affirmed, that it was impossible. He was sincere in his protestation, but the actual experiment was necessary to convince and humble him. Accordingly, when left to himself, he fell before the first temptation. And here the impetuosity of his temper was still manifest. He did not stop at a simple denial of Jesus, he confirmed it by an oath, and at length proceeded to utter bitter imprecations against himself, if he so much as knew him, whom he had seen transfigured in glory upon the mount, and prostrate in an agony in the garden. Such was the weakness and inconsistency of this prince of the apostles *."

Such a character, with all its blemishes, is highly esteemed of God; and we have often seen the warm-hearted and sincere, with great failings, honoured and approved above others of more circumspection and purity of life, who, at the same time, though sincere in heart, have been comparatively cold and languid in their religion. It was thus we account for the extraordinary commendation bestowed on David—and the singular success of Peter in the first promulgation of Christianity, and many others.

We shall now adduce a specimen of Peter's doctrine on the subject of grace and divine influences, which surely deserves peculiar regard, independent of his character, when we consider how much he knew

* Newton's Rev. of Eccles. Hist. p. 75, 76.

of those subjects, not only by divine instruction, but also by experience.

The first epistle of Peter is dated from a city called *Babylon*, but literally or mystically; and if the latter (as most think) whether Rome or Jerusalem be intended, is of little importance to our present subject. It was probably written about thirty years after his master was crucified; when the gospel had successfully spread through many distant and extensive countries, and made innumerable converts to the cross—to these, whether Jews or Gentiles,—whether originally residing in those parts, or thither dispersed for their reception of Christianity, the apostle directs his letter, and thus characterizes them, as

“ELECT according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through SANCTIFICATION of the SPIRIT, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ *:” which, if I am not greatly mistaken, implies that the sanctification of the Spirit, in some degree, is necessary previous to **any** course of acceptable obedience, as well as to that **peace** which is the effect of the blood of Christ sprinkled **on the conscience**.

By *some* degree of sanctification, I mean at least the beginning of it in *regeneration*, which is, I think, thus explained in the following verse—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath REGENERATED † us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of

* 1 Pet. i. 2.

† Dr. J. Taylor, *Diddridge*, ἀναγεννάει.

Jesus Christ from the dead—to an inheritance *,” &c. That is, faith in a risen Saviour, is the mean of our regeneration, and that new birth opens to us a prospect of “an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in the heavens for you (saith he) who are kept [guarded as in a garrison †], by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” So that the power of God is not only the cause of our first conversion, but preserves us from apostacy, and leaves us not till we are beyond the reach of enemies and danger.

The second epistle breathes the same spirit as the former. It was written still nearer the close of his life, and in the prospect of his approaching dissolution. It opens thus—“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us in the righteousness of OUR GOD and SAVIOUR Jesus Christ ‡—grace and peace be multiplied unto you §.”—On the face of this passage we observe that true faith is *precious*—*alike* precious in all believers, Jews and Gentiles, ministers and private Christians:—that this faith rests in the *righteousness* of Jesus Christ—and that he is their God and Saviour; terms which the sacred writers, to say the least, often so use as to shew that they were not afraid of their being applied to Jesus in the sublimest

* 1 Pet. i. 3.

† *Doddridge Phlegmenes*.

‡ See 1 J. iii. 23; 1 J. iv. 19; *Beza, Doddridge, Watts, &c.*

§ Chap. i. 1, 2.

sense.—“ According as his divine power hath given us all things which [appertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us unto glory and virtue; whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of A * divine nature †.” The construction of this passage is somewhat intricate; but so far is obvious, that the end of the promises (the word of God) is regeneration (as above observed) and that regeneration is the participation of a divine nature.

Sr. J O H N.

Called A. D. 31. Died in 100, aged about 94.

This was the youngest of the apostles, but admitted to the most confidential intimacy with his Master, whom he constantly attended, and leaned commonly upon his bosom when they sat at table, from which and other circumstances, he was denominated *the disciple that Jesus loved*. No contemptible proof this, by the way, that Jesus was no impostor, had no dangerous secrets to be betrayed, or he would not have trusted them with an inexperienced youth, whose disposition also appears to have been the reverse of every thing requisite for intrigue—frank, generous,

* So *Beza*, *Gulph*, &c.

† Ver. 4.

and affectionate ; but at the same time sudden, warm, impetuous ; qualities which often meet in the same persons, and form the best characters.

The facts from which this character is sketched are to be found in the gospels, whither I judge it sufficient to refer. But there is an anecdote recorded of him by *Eusebius* *, which, though he may be exceptionable authority, so well agrees with his general character, that I shall subjoin it. While our apostle was visiting the churches in Ephesus and its neighbourhood, after his return from banishment in Patmos, he met with a promising young man, whom he committed to the care of one of the chief ministers, by whom he was instructed and baptized ; but some time after this youth was drawn away by evil company, and became the captain of a banditti. St. John hearing this on his return, was much grieved, and though aged and infirm, determined even at the risk of his life, to seek this lost sheep on the mountains. He found him indeed a bravado in wickedness, yet his conscience smote him, and he fled at the sight of the venerable apostle : with many passionate intreaties, however, he was prevailed on to return, dissolved into penitence, and with great joy restored to the Christian fold.

St. John's first work was the gospel which bears his name, and which early tradition states to have been written in opposition to the heresies of Ceren-

* Hist. Eccles. lib. 3. cap. 23.

thus,

thus, who taught many things dishonourable to the work and person of Jesus Christ. Thus much is evident, that the grand object of this Evangelist is to advance his Master's character; and that, therefore, he particularly selects such of his actions and discourses as are best adapted to that end. With the same view, instead of beginning with the humble birth of the man Jesus, he leads us back to the origin of the universe, places the Lamb in "the midst of the throne," and irradiates him with the honours of creative majesty, before he shews him degraded in frail mortality. Hear his own emphatic and sublime language:—"In the beginning was the *Logos*," that is, the Reason, the Wisdom, the WORD—"The WORD was WITH GOD—the WORD WAS GOD—and the WORD was MADE FLESH." If there is any obscurity in this passage, it arises from the dignity of the subject, and of the language. For, however the *litterati* may despise the eloquence of a fisherman, and critics may join with those who called our Evangelist and Peter "ignorant and unlearned men*," thus much, must I think be admitted, that a plain simple man, of good natural parts, and whose heart is full of his subject, will sometimes without supernatural aid (and much more with) rise to a majesty of idea and expression, that defies the cold hand of criticism, and pours contempt on all the affected eloquence of the schools.

* *Act* iv. 13.

To understand St. John it has been thought necessary to recur to the writings of *Plato* and his disciple *Philo*; but John was no philosopher. Before he followed Christ, it is not likely he had ever heard of either of them; and afterward he had a better master. To send "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and who "leaned on his bosom," to learn divinity of an heathen, or an heathenised Jew, is an absurdity that common sense blushes at. After the day of Pentecost the absurdity encreases. When the full day of plenary inspiration was poured into his mind, to seek for knowledge among those who sat in "darkness and the shadow of death," would have been to prefer the glimmering of a taper to the beams of noon day,—or in the language of the prophet, forsaking "the fountain of living waters, to labour in hewing out cisterns, yea, broken cisterns which can hold no water *."

Let the reader pardon this digression, which was occasioned by finding too many commentators disposed to make the philosopher comment on the Evangelist; and obscure the grand truths of Christianity, by the dark dogmas of heathenism. Plato, as a heathen, I admire; and there are some excellent things even in Philo; but away with both of them while we attend to the apostle.

"That was the true light, [namely, the Word or Logos] which coming into the world, enlighteneth

* Jer. ii. 13.

every man," by the revelation and diffusion of the gospel:—"He (blessed Redeemer!) came unto his own [country] but his own [people] received him not. But to as many as DID RECEIVE him, to them gave he power, [privilege and authority] to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth—and of his fullness have all we received, and grace FOR grace*:" that is, either grace ANSWERING to grace—grace FOR encrease of grace—or, rather grace UPON grace, an abundance and fulness of grace answering to all our exigencies †.

Nothing can be more full to our purpose, than this evidence of the Evangelist, especially as it is experimental, and teaches us that not only the weakest, but the strongest,—not only ourselves, but the first and inspired Christians—were indebted for all their attainments to grace—to the rich and free grace of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.

The general epistle of John was written, according to *Lod. or.* near twenty years after his gospel; but is in the same stile, and breathes the same spirit. I shall quote it very sparingly.

* 1 John. i. 9—16. See *Did. Mge.*

† *Pol. Syn. Cr.*

“ Whosoever is born of God doth not PRACTICE * sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot [thus] sin, because he is born of God †.” The misapprehension of this text has occasioned many mistakes, but the above rendering, which I conceive to be exact, has no difficulties. Most certainly the principle implanted in regeneration, is a principle of holiness. And though the corruption of the heart, and the strength of temptation, will sometimes prevail; yet the believer cannot persevere in a course of evil like other men.

Again, “ Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us ‡.” Which sentiment is again repeated in other words in a subsequent chapter: “ He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself §”—which witness is afterwards explained of *eternal life in Christ Jesus*. “ This is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life ||.” That is to say, that divine and eternal life communicated to us through Christ Jesus, is an internal, infallible witness to the truth and reality of the Christian religion in the first place; and, secondly, to the truth and certainty of our interest in it. And this evidence is in many respects preferable to all other. “ The gospel of Christ, (says the amiable

* *Απαρσταν ε' ποιει.*

§ Ch. v. 15.

† Ch. p. iii. 9.

|| Ver. 11, 12.

‡ Ver. 24.

Dr. *Watts*) is like a seal or signet, of such inimitable and divine graving, that no created power can counterfeit it; and when the Spirit of God has stamped this gospel on the soul, there are so many holy and happy lines drawn, or impressed thereby; so many sacred signatures and divine features stamped on the mind, that give certain evidence both of a heavenly signet, and a heavenly operator *.”

ST. P A U L.

Converted A. D. 35. Martyred 66.

Last, but not least, comes the great apostle of the Gentiles. St. Paul's character has been so repeatedly drawn by very able hands, that it would be rashness in me to attempt it. I wish to confine myself to his experience, and to the adducing a few passages from his writings, that evidently relate to, and illustrate, the doctrines of experimental religion.

It is well known that our apostle was educated under the rabbi *Gamaliel*, a man celebrated for his wisdom and learning; and, it should seem, a man of probity and strict moral. Here it was, I conceive, that Paul acquired that Jewish learning which he has used to so good purpose in the epistle to the Hebrews,

which is, I believe with sufficient evidence, ascribed to him. I know that the doctrine of Types is ridiculed by the moderns, and that all the arguments derived therefrom appear weak and trifling to the admirers of Aristotle and Locke; but to the Jews they were forcible, at least as arguments *ad Hominem*, being of the same nature, and, in general, much superior to those used by the most ancient and admired rabbins; and perhaps when it shall please the Lord to recal his ancient people again, those will be found the most useful parts of the New Testament.

But here Paul acquired not only his learning, but his prejudices—he was educated a Pharisee, as himself tells us, the strictest sect among the Jews, and really thought he served God in persecuting his saints. Alas! for the deceitfulness of the human heart, which in nothing appears more evident than in this circumstance, that it transforms the basest crimes into virtues; and conceives of the God of mercy as delighting in cruelty and blood! It is to this early period of his life, our apostle long after refers, when he says—“I was alive without the law once:” that is, he was insensible to his true estate as a sinner; he was whole, he was righteous in his own esteem, and therefore very consistently rejected Jesus Christ and his gospel, as unnecessary and unsuitable to him. “But (says he) when the law came” home to my conscience, when by the grace of God I saw its spirituality and dominion over me, then “sin,” which I
had

had long thought mortified and dead, revived, and I died * ;” i. e. as he elsewhere explains himself, he “ became dead to the law, through faith ;” had no more hopes of life and salvation from that quarter, but was content to trust alone in the quickning grace of the Redeemer.

St. Paul’s conversion is twice related in the Acts, and that with such a strength and perspicuity of language, that the best paraphrase can only enervate and obscure it. I will therefore request such readers as do not distinctly remember that history, to turn to their New Testament, and then examine the following observations on the fact.

1. I think it cannot be denied that his conversion was by *invincible* grace. Here was no pre-disposition for it, but the contrary. His heart burned with rage—he breached out threatening and slaughter—he even approached the city where he meant to exhibit fresh scenes of cruelty—perhaps his thoughts were now occupied on this very subject, and he anticipated the honour he should acquire by extending the flames of persecution to Antioch.—But the thoughts of man are vain—the appointed hour of deliverance was arrived : a beam of celestial glory shone around him ; a ray of efficacious grace shot (like lightning) to his heart, and instantly subdued it ; but I need not enlarge—I believe it is universally admitted that Paul’s conversion was sudden, invincible, and even miracu-

* Rom. vii. 5.

lous; and I wish it to be considered that, in this instance particularly, “he was to be “a pattern to those who should hereafter believe to life everlasting *.”

2. Here was an instance of *discriminating* grace. Not those who accompanied him, who perhaps were compelled officially to attend him—but their malicious chief is the subject of it—They saw the glory, but they did not see the Saviour: they heard a voice, but it was not addressed to them.

3. It was *unmerited* grace. “To me (says he) who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given †—Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy.”—It is observable, that whereas modern divines use to palliate the depravity and infirmity of human nature, and to extol the strength of our natural virtues, not so our apostle. Such an one would have said I was sincere, zealous, and just, according to my best knowledge. He says “a blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious:” and glories only in that faithful saying, “Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

4. It was *accumulated* grace—“grace UPON grace”—“The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant §” in his conversion, and is therefore the theme of all his discourses and epistles—and as he “grew in grace,” he grew more sensible of his obligations to

* 1 Tim. i. 16. † Ver. 13. 16. ‡ Ver. 15. § Ver. 14.

it. To transcribe all the passages pertinent to our subject from St. Paul's writings, would be to transcribe the whole. A few passages, however, must be selected; and those shall be only from his epistles to the Corinthians and the Romans, beginning with the first epistle to the former.

In chap. ii. our apostle states in the strongest terms the necessity of the Holy Spirit's influences. "The natural man" (saith he)—that is, not the profligate and abandoned only, but every man destitute of the Spirit of God, as he afterwards explains it—"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual [or influenced by the Spirit] DISCERNETH all things *;" that is the mysteries of the divine life, and of the gospel, of which St. Paul had been speaking.

To the same persons, he says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you †?" which is repeated afterward with additional force. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ‡?"—Alas! some Christian teachers are not only ignorant of this, but teach the contrary. But what would Paul have said to them?

Chapters xii. and xiii. relate almost intirely to our subject, but I can only name them.

* Ver. 14, 15.

† Chap. iii. 16.

‡ Chap. vi. 19.

In his second epistle, St. Paul asserts,

“ If our gospel be VEILED, it is VEILED to those that are PERISHING, among whom [are they] whose unbelieving minds the God of this world hath blinded, lest the LUSTRE of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should BEAM FORTH upon them——For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath BEAMED into our hearts the LUSTRE of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ *.” Here I beg leave to observe, 1. that God and Satan are placed in contrast: the latter darkens the understanding by his influences, whence the Jews calls him SAMAEI, the god who blinds: but the true God, on the contrary, illuminates the understandings of men by the grace of his Holy Spirit. I add 2. that this work of illumination in the mind, is compared to the first creation of “ light out of darkness,” as being wrought in the same sovereign efficacious and instantaneous manner. Farther, the apostle pursues the comparison between the first and new creation——“ If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new .”

The twelfth chapter relates to the extraordinary revelations with which he was favoured, and which exposed him (such is the frailty of the best men!) to the danger of spiritual pride and vain glory. To

* Ch. iv. 3, 4, 6. See *Doddridge*.

† Ch. v. 17.

prevent this, "a thorn in the flesh" was given him—probably a bodily infirmity, which (to the false teacher, an agent of Satan, taking advantage of it to reproach him therewith,) might be a means of humbling him, lest he should be "exalted above measure." In this trial he applies to the throne of grace to be delivered therefrom; but the Lord, who often answers prayer in a manner very different from our requests, instead of removing the trial, gave a promise of support under it—"My grace is sufficient for thee. Most gladly, therefore, (saith the apostle) will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me;" literally "TABERNACLE upon me," alluding perhaps to the glory of the Lord resting upon the tabernacle of Moses.

We come now to the Epistle to the *Romans*, written after those to the *Corinthians*, which is of itself a system of divinity. The three first chapters treat of the depravity of human nature, and prove that "both Jews and Gentiles, are all under sin." This naturally leads our inspired author to shew the impossibility of living by the law, and to explain the Gospel method of justification. In the seventh chapter he comes to directly condemn experimental religion, and therefore will require our particular attention.

The former part of this chapter has been already quoted. He "was alive without the law once,"

et. Ver. 13—25.

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but

but all his hopes and self-confidence were totally destroyed by a proper sense of its spirituality. Under these circumstances he utters that remarkable confession, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin *." For the good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do †."

It has been indeed disputed whether the apostle here speaks in his own person, or in the person of an unbeliever; both are partly right. Paul speaks of what he and all men were *wholly* in a state of nature, and remain *partially* in a state of grace. Indeed there needs no farther proof of their consistency with a state of grace, than that thousands of the best men have adopted them as their own experience. Nor, are they, in fact, wholly suitable to the case of others. There may indeed arise faint desires and fruitless wishes in the hearts of bad men: but no unconverted person delights in the law of God after the inner man—nor does that exclamation, "O wretched man that I am!" express the feelings of an unrepentant sinner.

It has been pleaded, that heathens themselves have expressed sentiments somewhat similar; but then it should be remembered, that they were some of the wisest and best of them, of whom we may hope, that they were "not far from the kingdom of heaven."

In the next chapter the apostle speaks of being led, influenced, and taught by the holy Spirit of God. "For if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is

* "Under sin"—i. e. at first totally. 1 Cor. vii. 14.

none of his"—and—"as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, ABBA (that is) Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God *."

Farther—"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for the saints, according to (the will of) God †."

Can any man, after seriously reading these passages, deny, that St. Paul taught the doctrine of divine influences? With such an one I would disdain to reason. I shall therefore transcribe no farther; but recommend it to my readers, to peruse the whole epistles to the Ephesians, Phillipians, and Colossians, which relate almost entirely to this subject.

* Chap. viii. 9, 14

† Ver. 26, 27.

CHAP. VI.

SOME TRACES OF THESE TRUTHS AMONG THE
GREEK AND ROMAN PHILOSOPHERS—ÆTHIOPIAN,
INDIANS, CHINESE, &c.

WHEN God made the Sun, “the greater light to rule the day,” he also made the Moon, “a weaker light to rule the night.” So while the sun of divine revelation illuminated the Jewish hemisphere, even in the darkest regions of heathenism, “he left not himself without a witness *.” The inferior luminary of the Gentile world indeed strongly resembled the queen of night, in its light being weak, cold, and reflected. It was *weak*, in the degree of evidence it furnished, in the precepts it conveyed—*cold* in the motives by which these maxims were enforced—and resembled the moon in a still more striking circumstance—it was a borrowed light; *reflected* in great measure, from the sun of divine revelation.

By divine revelation, however, I do not merely intend the Hebrew scriptures; but refer back to those earlier rays of truth, which were emitted to the patriarchs Noah, Abraham, Melchisedec, Joseph, Job, and

* ACTS xiv. 17.

others,

others, who resided or sojourned in various parts of the world, where some memorial of their character was preserved for many ages, and, with their characters, some of their maxims of piety—maxims which would be revived at different times by successive witnesses of their truth; for in every age, and in every nation, we are led to hope, some few have “feared God, and worked righteousness,” and consequently, have been “accepted with him*.”—These being taught by the same Spirit from whence those truths originated, would naturally revive, enforce, and perpetuate them.

It is also, I think, highly probable, at least, that several of the more eminent philosophers, who were great travellers, and curious in their researches, met with fragments of the sacred writers, and borrowed therefrom some of the sublimest of their ideas.

With respect to the salvation of the heathen, I have already hinted my sentiments. “Suppose a heathen, destitute of the means of grace, by which conversion is usually wrought, to be brought to a sense of his misery, of the emptiness and vanity of worldly things, to a conviction that he cannot be happy without the favour of the great Lord of the world, to a feeling of guilt, and a desire of mercy; and that though he has no explicit knowledge of a Saviour, he directs the cry of his heart to the unknown Supreme to this purport, ‘*Eus entium, miserere mei,*’

* Act. x. 35.

‘Father and source of beings, have mercy on me.’ Who will prove, that such views and desires can arise in the heart of a sinner without the energy of that Spirit, which Jesus is exalted to bestow? Who will take upon him to say, that his blood has not sufficient efficacy to redeem to God a sinner who is thus disposed, though he has never heard of his name? Or, who has a warrant to affirm, that the supposition I have made is, in the nature of things, impossible to be realised*.”—That this supposition not only may, but has been realised, will, I hope, appear from the evidence I shall adduce.

But should it be inquired, were they saved without Jesus Christ? I reply, in the words of another amiable divine.—“I am persuaded, that God never did, or will, forgive the sins of any man upon earth, whether Jew, Heathen, or Christian, nor receive any of our sinful race into his favour, but upon the account of what Jesus Christ his Son, the Mediator, has done and suffered, for the redemption or expiation of sin, and the recovery of man to the favour of God: so that if heathens are saved, I think it is owing to the merit of Christ, as this doth.”

The former being a very old question; I shall now beg leave to change my audience, and the classic reader will, I hope, be pleased to forgive the authors he has been used to admire and revere, bring in their quota of

* *NOTES MODERNE, &c.* VOL. II. P. 419.

† *HEATHENISM, &c.* as quoted by Tisdall Reader, p. 104.

evidence,

evidence, and subscribe to the truth of experimental piety*.

And probably he will be ready to adopt the language of the celebrated *Jansenius*, who could not but “greatly wonder that many of the Gentile Philosophers philosophised far more piously and justly than many Christian schoolmen †.”

P Y T H A G O R A S.

Born 568 B. C. Died 497.

This venerable sage was the first who took on him the modest name of a *philosopher*, i. e. a lover of wisdom: his predecessors bearing the more pompous titles of *sophists*, or wise men. His theology was feeling, and is thought to have been in part derived from a confused and indigested notion of the sacred scriptures, of which he probably had some knowledge in the course of his travels; though it is a mere unwarranted supposition of some, that he conversed with any of the Prophets in their captivity at Babylon.

Pythagoras was born at Samos, a small island in the Ægean Sea, and many of the circumstances of his life are unknown. He is said to have been educated at Samos, and to have travelled in Greece, Italy, and Egypt. He is supposed to have been a disciple of the Egyptian sages, and to have introduced their doctrines into Italy. He is also supposed to have been a disciple of the Greek sages, and to have introduced their doctrines into Italy. He is also supposed to have been a disciple of the Indian sages, and to have introduced their doctrines into Italy. —M. de la Harpe, *History of the Lives of the Philosophers*.

[Aug. Tim. II. Lib. ii. cap. 2.]

He believed the divine omnipresence, and conceived of the Deity as the source of all things, particularly of the human soul, which he considered as a particle of the divinity, and placed its happiness in union and similitude to him; but, being a heathen, has expressed his ideas with an obscurity, that occasioned him to be accused of strange opinions, though perhaps his chief errors were in expression.

Pythagoras himself wrote nothing; but his golden verses, which were probably written with his approbation, are allowed to contain a just summary of his moral principles.

In these he exhorts men to pray to God for assistance in all their concerns.

“ In all thou dost, first let thy prayers ascend,
 “ And to the gods thy labours first commend,
 “ From them implore success, and hope a prosperous
 end. }

“ So shall thy abler mind be taught to soar;
 “ And Wisdom in her secret ways explore,
 “ To range thro’ heav’n above, and earth below,
 “ Immortal gods, and mortal men to know.”

Pythagoras (according to Jamblicus) taught his disciples three ways of becoming masters of true philosophy—by converse or communion with the Deity; by imitating him in well-doing; and by death, which he considered as so far from a real evil that it was the necessary entrance into permanent felicity.

His commentator, *Hieracles*, who wrote after the introduction of Christianity, hath an express discourse on this passage, “concerning the necessity of our endeavours after virtue on the one hand, and of the divine blessing on the other.”

S O C R A T E S.

Born B. C. 470. Died about 400.

Socrates was unquestionably the greatest character in heathen antiquity. He is said to have been the first that brought philosophy from heaven to earth; that is, reduced it from vain speculations and wild theories, to employ it in the service of God and of mankind. Others taught their disciples what they denominated wisdom and science: he endeavoured to instruct his in piety and good morals, and so to make them better men. He was, according to Plato, the model of a truly righteous man, who loved himself for himself alone.

It is remarkable, however, that there was nothing in the countenance of Socrates which indicated his excellencies of character; it appears by the following anecdote. Some of his disciples, being directed to him a celebrated astrologer and physiognomist, to whom their master was an entire stranger, he pronounced

nounced him to be a libidinous, ill-tempered man. The disciples of the philosopher knowing the falsehood of this character, began to ridicule both the physiognomist and his art; but their master replied, "Such as he describes me I was born: but since that time (by parody) I have been born *again*: and my *second birth* has prevailed over my first." A remark this by the bye, which though in some measure it justifies the truth of this art, greatly weakens its utility; since, admitting the countenance to be an index to the *natural* disposition, it can discover nothing of any change induced either by divine grace, or moral instruction; and consequently is liable to misrepresent the best characters.

The chief account we have of Socrates and his doctrines, is from his disciple Plato, in whose dialogues, where Socrates is the speaker, we have, no doubt, his genuine principles, if not his language. One of the most remarkable passages is the following.

"It seems best to me, (saith Socrates to one of his disciples) that we expect quietly; nay, it is absolutely necessary, that we wait with patience, till such time as we can learn certainly how we ought to behave ourself both towards God and towards men. When will that time come? (replies the disciple) And who is it that will teach us this? For, methinks, I earnestly desire to see and know who the person is that will do it.—It is one (answers Socrates) who has now a con-
cern

cern for you. But, in like manner as *Homer* relates that Minerva took away the mist from before the eyes of Diomedes, that he might be able to distinguish one person from another : so it is necessary that the mist, which is now before your mind, be first taken away, that afterwards you may learn to distinguish between good and evil ; for as yet you are not able to do it.—Let the person you mentioned (replies the disciple), take away this mist, or what ever else it be, so soon as he pleases ; for I am willing to do any thing that he shall direct, who so ever he be, so that I may become a good man.—Nay, (answers Socrates again) that person has a wonderful readiness and willingness to do all this for you.—It will be best then (concludes the disciple) to forbear any more sacrifices till he appears——and, I hope, God willing, it may not be far off.”

To me it appears very evident that the above passage refers to him who was “the desire of all nations,” and of whose appearing all nations had a general and confused expectation, originally derived, I do not net, from the early promises of mercy made to the patriarchs.

This induces Socrates to say in another place—
 “There is somewhat which by divine power has followed me from my childhood : this *dæmon* is a voice which signifies to me what I must do ; yet does not compel me to do any thing : but if any of my friends

communicate somewhat to me, and that voice dehort me from the same, it also suffers me not to do it *.”

Socrates appears to me to have adopted the doctrine of guardian angels; but whether he mistook the dictates of his own conscience, or the suggestions of a higher power, for the admonition of his good angel or demon, it is not necessary to determine.

That this philosopher believed, as far as could be expected in a heathen, the doctrine of divine influences, is unquestionable. Besides the hints to this effect above, we find him positively asserting that “virtue cometh not from nature, nor from [human] teaching; but by a divine power, or fate †. Nature gives not virtue. We are born indeed *for* this, but *without* it ‡.”

So conversing with Aristodemus, who doubted of a Providence, and even of a Deity, Socrates addressed him in these emphatic words—“O *Aristodemus*, apply yourself sincerely to worship God; he will EX-LIGHTEN you, and all your doubts will be soon removed §.”

Nothing could be more unjust than the charge on which Socrates suffered death; nor anything more heroic than the manner in which he bore it. The conversation at this period was highly interesting, being chiefly on the immortality of the soul; a truth of which, as a heathen, he had no assurance from re-

* *Plutarch*, *Thæm.* c. 17. † *Idem*, *ibid.* c. 18. ‡ *Plutarch*, *ibid.* c. 19.

§ *Idem*, *ibid.* c. 20. § 2. *ibid.* c. 21. § 1.

velation, and therefore it is not to be wondered, if he sometimes spake with hesitation. But as his death approached, his doubts were dissipated, his hopes brightened, and he appears to have died in the full assurance of immortality. “A soul (says he) which cannot die, merits all the moral and intellectual improvements we can possibly give it. A spirit formed to live for ever, should be making continual advances in virtue and wisdom. To a well cultivated mind, the body is no more than a temporary prison. At death, such a soul is conducted, by its invisible guardian, to the heights of empyræan felicity: where it becomes a fellow-commoner with the wise and good of all ages.”

Such sentiments as these led the celebrated *Justin Martyr*, to say that Socrates was inspired by the divine LOGOS, the Son of God; and procured the encomiums of St. *Augustine*. It is clear, however, that he did not die a martyr to the doctrine of the divine Unity, as some have pretended: but whether his error arose from a confused notion of the Trinity and a mediator, or merely from heathen prejudices, is not for me to determine.

P L A T O.

Born B. C. 429. Died 348.

The *divine Plato* as he is commonly called, was the most celebrated scholar of Socrates, and as a philosopher, and a moralist, inferior only to his master.

Bishop *Stillingfleet*, and some others, have been of opinion, that the Platonic doctrine of a pre-existent state was derived from some imperfect traditions of the scripture doctrine of the Fall, and by Plato himself mystically intended. “I have heard (says the philosopher) from the wise men, that we are now dead, and that the body is our sepulchre^{*}.” In conformity to this idea, he derived the Greek word for *body* †, from another which signifies a *grave* or *sepulchre* ‡. He also compares the soul to a winged chariot, which in its golden perfect state, soared aloft, and passed through heaven and earth; but when it was thrust into the body, it lost its wings, and remained there a prisoner to the passions §.

Plato's theology is uncommonly sublime. He placed the sovereign good in “a resemblance to the divine nature, which can flow from God alone.” “As nothing is like the sun, but by the solar influences: so

* *Coelia.* † *Σῆμα.* ‡ *Σῆμα.* § *Phædrus.*
(faith

(saith *Plato*) nothing can resemble God, but by an emanation of the divine light into the soul *.”

In the preamble to his treatise, *De Legibus*, he says, “If there is any among you who cannot resist the solicitations of the tempter, let him implore the assistance of the gods.”

As we have already quoted *Plato*, in citing *Socrates*, I would only add, that notwithstanding what *Plato* taught of the excellency of virtue, yet such was his sense of the corruption of mankind, that he rightly supposed, if a perfect character were to appear on earth, he would excite the envy and malevolence of mankind; that he would be “scourged, tormented, bound,” and in the end “die by crucifixion †.” A sentiment fully justified in the treatment of the Son of God incarnate. Indeed *Plato* himself (as well as *Socrates*) found this truth verified in a degree in his own experience, being a severe sufferer for his virtues.

C L E A N T H E S.

Born B. C. 341. Died 240 B. C.

Of this antient stoic philosopher, the disciple of *Zeno*, but little has reached our time. The hymn

* *Phædus*. † 2^d *Republic*.

from which the following extract is taken, is highly valued, and not without reason. I give it from the elegant poetic version of Mr. *Hyt*, at the end of his translation of Pindar.

“ But O, great Father, thunder-ruling God !
 Who in thick darkness mak’st thy dread abode ;
 Thou, from whose bounty all good gifts descend !
 Do thou from ignorance mankind defend !
 The clouds of vice and folly, O controul ;
 And *send the beams of wisdom* on the soul !
 Those radiant beams, by whose all-piercing flame,
 Thy justice rules this universal frame.
 That, honour’d with a portion of *thy light*,
 We may eisty thy goodness to requite
 With honorary songs, and grateful lays,
 And hymn thy glorious works with ceaseless praise *.”

The succeeding philosophers, whose evidence I shall adduce, were either contemporary with, or subsequent to, the publication of Christianity ; of which, however, perhaps these knew little but from popular prejudice, and some made no other use of their knowledge of the system than that of enriching their compositions with its spoils. It should be remarked, that from this period many of the best philosophers were converted to Christianity, and some of them we

* To this Author, as well as to *Quint*, St. Paul perhaps refers in Acts xvii. 28. See *Doddridge*.

shall have occasion to cite in the next chapter, as Christian Fathers.

S E N E C A.

Born A. D. 2. Died A. D. 65.

Seneca is not one of the most unexceptionable characters in antiquity. *Gataker* accuses him of flattery and inconsistency, and with too much reason. There are however many fine sentiments scattered in his works, and there is a smartness in his stile which often recommends them. I shall therefore subjoin a few quotations.

Seneca has been cited to prove the natural corruption of our nature. "All sins are in all men (says he) though all do not appear in each: he that hath one sin, hath all. We say that all men are intemperate, avaricious, luxurious, malicious; not that those sins *appear* in all; but because they may be, yea, *are* in all, though latent. A man may be mischievous, although he do no hurt."

All moral goodacts therefore he attributes to the Deity. "No man is [truly] good without God. . . . *He deus ille in eoq; Deum.* If thou find a man fearless in the midst of dangers, untainted amidst

riches, happy in adversity, calm in the midst of tempests, looking down as from an eminence on all things sublunary—dost thou not admire him? Says thou not—virtue is of all things the most great and noble—it is a *divine power descended from above*? *”

He goes farther, and speaks almost like a Christian. “There is a HOLY SPIRIT residing in us, who watches and observes both good and evil men, and will treat us after the same manner that we treat him †.”

Many other passages might be produced to the same effect; but the preceding sufficiently ascertain the sentiments of this ingenious heathen.



E P I C T E T U S.

Died A. D. 161.

This poor, but celebrated, stoic philosopher (like Socrates) wrote nothing himself, but his sentiments are preserved in the remains of his disciple *Arrian*.

The stoics, it is well known, affected an indifference to pain or pleasure, and in fact, to all things external; and some of them acted, it must be conceded, on very sublime principles. What can be more noble than the following address to the Deity—“Hencefor-

* Ep. 41.

† Ibid.

ward, use me to whatever pleaseth thee. I acquiesce, and am of the same mind with thee. I refuse nothing that shall seem good to thee. Lead me whithersoever thou pleasest. Let me act whatever part thou wilt, whether of a public or a private person, of a rich man, or a beggar."

The heathen (says Dr. Cudworth) used to invoke the supreme God alone, particularly imploring his assistance against the assaults of temptations, which they called *phancies*. To this purpose is that of *Epicetetus*—"This is a great conflict, a divine enterprize: now remember the supreme God, and call upon him as thy *helper* and *assistant*, as the mariners do upon Castor and Pollux."

Again—"A man will never be able, any otherwise to expel grief, fear, desire, envy, &c. than by looking to God alone, and being devoted to him, and the observance of his command."

Once more—"Hail we understanding, what should we do else, but both publicly and privately praise God, and return him thanks? Ought not they who dig, plough, and eat, continually to sing to God such a hymn as this:—"Great is that God who gave us these instruments to cultivate the earth with:—"Great is that God who gave us seed, &c. who en-
 "abled us to grow in life and joy, and to breed even
 "in our sleep?"—and then to add, and divine assistance
 "enables us, "to praise God for the beauty of his
 "understanding all these things."

PLUTARCH.

P L O T I N U S.

Died A. D. 270.

The last of our philosophers shall be this celebrated Platonist, of Lycopolis in Egypt.

He compares the soul of man, in his fallen state, to a cinder, out of which the heavenly fire is extinguished.

The following sentiments are exceedingly beautiful, but the reader will recollect our having met with the first idea before, in sacred writ.

“As the sun cannot be discerned but by its own beams, so God cannot be known but by his own light: and, as the eye cannot see the sun, but by receiving its image, so man cannot know God but by receiving *his*.”

It is reported that when this philosopher was in the article of death, he said, “I am now endeavouring to rejoin the divine part of the universe”—alluding to the Pantheistic doctrine, since adopted by our celebrated poet:

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
“Whose body nature is, and God the soul*.”

We shall now turn from the Greeks and Romans, to enquire if any traces of the doctrine of divine in-

* POPE.

fluences can be found among the eastern, and other nations of great antiquity.

CHALDEANS.

The Chaldeans claim, and with reason, the highest antiquity for their religious traditions; and their oracles say, “The human soul, which has nothing mortal within her, will affectionately embrace God—and be wholly INEBRIATED WITH GOD *:” which last phrase is explained very rationally by *Pfellus* to mean—“filled with a superior light and illumination, and (as it were) transported out of herself †.”

EGYPTIANS.

For this article we must be indebted to *Jamblicus*, who in the fourth century of the Christian æra travelled in those parts, to collect what fragments he could meet with of the ancient philosophy and theology. The following passages are from his writings †.

“It is impossible to discourse [aright] of the gods without their aid; much less can we perform divine

* Compare *Pfellus* xxxvi. §. and remark on it above, p. 81.

† *Oracula magica* Zoroastri.

‡ *De Myt. Egypt.*

works without them. 'The human race is mean and weak ; fees but a small way, and is, naturally poss'essed of nothingness. 'There is but one remedy for its inherent error, confusion, and inconsistency,—to admit as much of the divine light as possible."

" God is all ; can do all ; hath filled all things with himself ; and he alone is worthy of regard, dignity, praise, and divine honour. Human nature is deformed, of no account, and a mere trifle compared with the divinity."

" We cannot speak rightly of the divine mind, unless we are ILLUMINATED BY HIS LIGHT. For the divine mind is the fountain of light, as well as of goodness."



P E R S I A N S.

Dr. *Hyle* * gives the following excellent prayer, from the introduction to an ancient Persian book, called SAD DER.

" O GOD, ENLIGHTEN my heart ; I am poor, enrich me. I am fallen into a corner of obscurity, and sunk into numerous evils by vice ; *free* my heart from impurity, and direct me in thy way. Remove evil far from me, and IRRADIATE my heart and countenance with THY LIGHT. Let not vice gain the ascendant over my body ; but lead me by the hand, O

* Persing. vet. Pers. cap. 33.

my Creator. Wean my heart from avarice and ambition; assist me by thy favour and beneficence.— I have girt myself in the way of thy religion, and broke off all my dependance on the creature. I will trust in thee, O thou most just !”

Father *Herbert* * also cites some passages from their books, equally striking and pertinent to our subject.

CADHA says—“ When a man begins to learn and to taste the truths of God, and the internal life, he only labours to recollect and examine his heart; but when he is farther advanced and more instructed in the science, (even) his own heart is a veil that hinders him from seeing. - - - The ear that is always attentive to God, never hears a voice that speaks not of him. The eye that is disposed to receive his light, views not the least atom, but as a mirror to represent its *light beloved*. This friend is God, whom we cannot dispose of as we please, when we have once lost him by the bad use of our liberty; nor can we any more recover his favour by our own strength, when deprived of it by our own fault.”

Must addressing the Deity—“ The man never dies, O God, who lives but for thee! A thousand times happy he, then, who is animated by thy Spirit.”

* *Herbert the Persian*, &c.

A R A B I A N S.

LOCKMAN the Wise, an eminent eastern philosopher, an Ethiopian slave, celebrated in the *Koran* for his piety and wisdom, is supposed to have been cotemporary with David, and by some authors believed to have been the original *Ezra*.

It is said a vision of angels once appeared to tell him, God had appointed him a monarch, and his vicegerent on earth. *Lockman* replied, "If it is by an absolute command of God, that I am to become such an one as you say, his will be done in all things; and I hope, if this should happen, that he will bestow on me all the GRACE necessary for enabling me to execute his commands faithfully; however, if he would give me the liberty to chuse my condition of life, I had rather continue in my present state, and be kept from offending him."

This answer, it is said, so well pleased the Deity, that he bestowed on *Lockman* an additional and extraordinary degree of wisdom*.

C H I N E S E.

This nation pretends to incredible antiquity; and prodigious relations have been given by the Jesuit

* *Sak's Koran*, p. 326

nationalities of their progress in the sciences, and the similarity of their religion to Christianity. After making all necessary abatements, however, for the channel through which our information comes, the following passages evince that amidst all their idolatry and superstition, they still retain some ideas of the necessity of divine influences.

In one of their original books, called CHU-KING, it is said, "What is called reason, is properly an attribute of TIEN, or the supreme God. The talents and *lights* which he *communicates* to men, are a participation of that reason. What is called *reason* in *Tien*, is in man *virtue*; and when he reduces it into practice, it is called *justice*. Our *own will*, and the corruption of the heart, very often darkens this reason; when it is once obscured, the virtue of the heart is mixed and adulterated."—"Tien pierces into the bottom of the heart, as light into a dark room. We must endeavour to correspond to his lights, as a musical instrument perfectly tuned. We must unite ourselves to him, as two pieces of marble that seem but one. We must receive from his hand, so soon as he opens it. He enlightens us continually; but our disorderly passions we shut up the entrance of his light."

The book *Ta-ho*, wrote by CONFUCIUS, speaks in the 17th chapter of "restoring in us that primitive nobility and purity, which the soul received from heaven, upon its first creation, which it has *lost* *by* *sin*, and which

*heaven alone can render to it by its internal irradiations and influences *."*

H I N D O O S.

Notwithstanding the introduction of Mahometanism in the eleventh century, paganism is still the general religion of the East Indies—divided however into a variety of sects, some of which, in respect of superstition and will worship, exceed all other nations upon earth.

It is an awful truth, that men will do any thing but what God enjoins: yea they will do a thousand things more than he commands, rather than yield a simple obedience to his will. This we see evidenced in the devotees of all false religions; who renounce all the enjoyments of the present life, however innocent, and subject themselves to voluntary mortifications much severer than any of the precepts of Christianity, rather than obey those precepts. The devotions, however, of Roman or eastern saints, must all yield to those of the Hindoos, who will frequently throw themselves under the chariot wheels of their idols, and suffer themselves to be crushed to death; and we are assured of an instance of the father of a numerous family, who devoted himself to the flames,

* *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, vol. II.

but a few years since, in hopes of restoring the health of his afflicted family, by appealing the angry deity*.

The Hindoes (or Gentoos as some call them) are in general worshippers of *Brabma*, whom they consider as the supreme God; beside whom they acknowledge a secondary deity, or mediator, called *Atchman*, (or *Atchman*) whom they suppose to have been more than once incarnate. This is conjectured by many to be the remnant of some very early traditions of the Messiah. “The votaries of *Atchman* pretend that their God ILLUMINATES the souls of his favourite adherers with a celestial light [†].”

Their priests are called *Bramins*. They have four *SHASTERS*, or laws, which they call *Veeds*. These form their Bible, and are held in inconceivable reverence. They are written in *Sanscrit*, which is a language peculiar to their literati, and they are cited on all occasions by them, as the Scriptures by the Christians. On these they have eighteen books of commentaries, called *Poornas*, which also are studied by the Bramins. These contain some good morals, but with them notions of infernal origin, many contradictions and inconsistencies, and recommend some very profligate characters.

However, “that there is one great God——that he is to be worshipped and served; that the soul is im-

* See a Letter to the Hindoes in the *Philos. Trans.* 1710.

[†] See the *Journal of the Asiatick Society*, &c. &c. Vol. 1. p. 12. & Vol. 2. p. 125.

mortal ; that we all have sinned ; and that some atonement is necessary ; are truths commonly believed among them all *."

La Croze cites from some of their books the following remarkable passage. " The Supreme Being is invisible, incomprehensible, immoveable, and without figure or outward form. No man hath seen him ; time hath not comprehended him ; his essence fills all things ; and every thing is derived from him. All power, all wisdom, all knowledge, all holiness, and all truth, dwell in him. He is infinitely good, just, and merciful. He hath created all, he preserves all, and delights to dwell among men, that he may conduct them to eternal happiness, a happiness which consists in loving and serving him †."

In the dialogues between *Krishna* and *Arjoun* in the *MAHABBARAT* ‡, (a Sanscreeet poem, supposed to be 4000 years old) we have a full explication of the nature of their devotion, the greater part of which consisting in " bodily worship," truly " profiteth little ;" but the following short extracts sufficiently shew them to retain in the midst of their superstition, some idea of the devotion of the heart.

" The man who is happy in his heart, at rest in his mind, and ENLIGHTENED WITHIN, is a *Yogy*,

* Letter from the Rev. J. Thomas, missionary in India. Baptist Register, 1862. Part I.

† *Histoire de Christianisme des Indes.* (Haye, 1724.)

‡ *Sketches of the Hist. &c. of the Hindoos.*

or one devoted to God, of a godly spirit, and obtaineth the immaterial nature of *Brahm*, the supreme.

“The *Yōgye*—is as a lamp standing in a place without wind, which waveth not—He beholdeth all things in the supreme soul, and the supreme soul in all things.”

In the same book, Arjoon thus addresseth the Deity : —“Thou art the prime Creator!—Eternal God, thou art the supreme! By thee the universe was spread abroad! Thou art *Vaym*, the God of the Winds; *Agnee*, the God of Fire; *Varm*, the God of the Ocean,”—and so forth.

“Reverence be unto thee; again and again reverence; O thou who art all in all! Great is thy power, and great thy glory! Thou art the Father of all things; wherefore I bow down, and with my body prostrate on the ground, crave thy mercy. Lord worthy to be adored! bear with me, as a father with his son, a friend with a friend, a lover with the beloved.”

The *Serke* were a sect of Hindoos distinguished both from the worshippers of *Brahm*, and the followers of Mahomed. Their name in their own language, as well as in ours, implies that they are enquirers after truth and wisdom, and they seem to be a sort of Gentle Puritans or Dissenters.

Mr. *Wallis*, who has obliged the European world

* See the *original* in *scripture* concerning the *Serke*, by C. Wallis, Esq. *Asiatic Researches* Vol. I.

with an account of these extraordinary people, was present at their worship, which he describes as very serious and solemn. He heard a hymn chaunted by a venerable old man, in praise of the unity, omnipresence, and omnipotence of the Deity. After this a younger minister pronounced a kind of liturgy, in which the people, at certain periods, uttered their responses. "They prayed (he says) *against temptation*; for GRACE TO DO GOOD; for the general good of mankind, for a *particular blessing* to the *Seeks*, and for the *safety* of those who, at that time, were on their travels." The service was concluded by a blessing from the aged priest, and followed by a "friendly feast," which closed the ceremonies of the day.



AMERICAN INDIANS.

We now turn to the new world. The peopling of America is a very curious, and much controverted subject. It appears to me, that this immense continent was peopled by very different nations, and at distant periods. From whatever countries they emigrated, however, they seem to have carried with them, not only the first principles of natural religion, but some traditions of divinely instituted rites, particularly sacrifices; and wherever the least appearance

has been of piety and devotion, there have been some traces of the doctrine of divine influences.

“Lo ! the poor Indian, whose untutor’d mind
 “Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind ;
 “His soul proud science never taught to stray
 “Far as the solar walk, or milky way ;
 “Yet simple Nature to his hope has given,
 “Behind the cloud-topp’d hill an humbler heaven ;

 “Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 “No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold *.”

The last words bring to view the unhappy and much-injured natives of South-America, who have reason to connect with the name of *Christian* every thing detestable and cruel. What can form a finer contrast to such depraved christianity than the following address of a dying *Mexican* to his son ?—“My son, endeavour to live exactly, praying God *continually* to assist thee ; thou art his property. He is thy Father, and loves thee more than I do : repose in him thy thoughts, and day and night direct thy sighs to him †.”

The reader will think for himself, but I confess it seems to me more scriptural and becoming to attribute such sentiments to God than nature ; and to believe

* *Fig. 2* Essay on Man.

† See *Enych. 2m. Art. 4. 5. 6.*

that himself alone can inspire such piety into the heart of an un instructed heathen.

The account given of the natives in North-America is such as may shame many christians. Mr. *Beatty*, a respectable missionary to these Indians, in his account of a tour among those in the neighbourhood of Pennsylvania *, relates, that being introduced to the king, or chief of the Delaware tribe, he arose from his seat, and “took us (says he) by the hand, and gave thanks to the great Being above, the Creator and Preserver of all, that we had an opportunity of seeing each other in the wilderness, and appeared very glad, and rejoiced on the occasion.” These are the men we call savages ; the enlightened Europeans would have been ashamed of such an appearance of piety on a like occasion. After having introduced their mission, and solicited leave to preach the gospel among them, in their answer they declared, “they believed there was a great God above, and desired to serve him in the best manner they could ; they thought of him at their rising up, and their laying down, and hoped he would look upon them, and be kind to them, and do them good.” After this, they gave a hearty welcome to the preaching of the gospel ; and in a subsequent part of this work, I may have occasion to take some notice of its success.—Whatever divines may think of such dispositions of mind, as above indicated, I cannot omit here observing, that in a let-

* *Beatty's Journal*, London. 1764.

ter from the Christian Indians under Mr. *Brainerd's* ministry to the above Delaware chief and his brethren, they say, "we are very glad you have such good desires. Certainly the Great Spirit above has *given* you those desires *."

But let me not be understood to insinuate by anything above advanced, that the gospel is an unnecessary institution, or that men might have been saved as well without it. We know by facts, that it is possible for inhabitants to exist in the coldest and darkest countries of the north; but shall we therefore say that, if it were possible, it would be useless or insalutary to introduce among them the solar influences of these milder regions? Surely not: neither is the gospel less excellent because, in some few instances, the Lord may please to show his sovereignty, in saving heathen sinners without an *express* discovery of it.

* *Berry's Journal*, p. 95.

C H A P. VII.

TESTIMONIES OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS, DURING THE FIVE FIRST CENTURIES.

BEFORE we cite these witnesses, it may not be impertinent to state what degree of weight and authority we attach to their evidence, since this subject has occasioned violent disputes among the learned; some having exalted them to almost equal authority with the inspired writers, while others have sunk them below the common standard of sensible and good men. In general, the old and orthodox divines speak highly of their piety, sagacity, and learning, while many of the moderns, particularly the Socinians, consider them, in all respects, contemptible. One of these writers, Dr. *Langborne*, roundly asserts that, “These lights of the church were, in general, most wretched fanatics, as ignorant and childish as they were cruel.”*

When I shall cite them distinctly, I may attempt briefly to appreciate their respective characters, both as to piety and learning; at present, I would only observe in general, that I consider them as wise and excellent men, who, amid the common frailties of human nature, and some peculiar foibles to which

* See *Analytical Review*, Vol. VII. p. 177.

they might respectively be subject, were well acquainted with the essentials of Christianity, were very sufficient witnesses for its truth, and deserve the fullest credit as to their own experience of its excellency and power; because here they could not be mistaken, and had no temptation to deceive; such of them at least as bore their witness in the face of sufferings and death *.



CLEMENT, Bishop of Rome.

He reigned from A. D. 65 to 83 †.

THE Clements is supposed to have been the composition of St. Paul. Thus much is certain, that of all the remains of the apostolical fathers, none were so highly esteemed as this bishop's first epistle to the Corinthians, which was inserted in the same volume with the New Testament, and read publicly in the churches along with it. This excellent letter, written in the name of the church at Rome, wherein he speaks of, begins thus:

* *Epistola ad Romanos*, c. 1. v. 12. *Epistola ad Corinthios*, c. 1. v. 14. *Epistola ad Galatas*, c. 2. v. 20. *Epistola ad Hebræos*, c. 13. v. 12. *Epistola ad Romanos*, c. 1. v. 12. *Epistola ad Corinthios*, c. 1. v. 14. *Epistola ad Galatas*, c. 2. v. 20. *Epistola ad Hebræos*, c. 13. v. 12. *Epistola ad Romanos*, c. 1. v. 12. *Epistola ad Corinthios*, c. 1. v. 14. *Epistola ad Galatas*, c. 2. v. 20. *Epistola ad Hebræos*, c. 13. v. 12. *Epistola ad Romanos*, c. 1. v. 12. *Epistola ad Corinthios*, c. 1. v. 14. *Epistola ad Galatas*, c. 2. v. 20. *Epistola ad Hebræos*, c. 13. v. 12.

† *Epistola ad Romanos*, c. 1. v. 12.

“ The church of God, which sojourneth at Rome to the the church of God which sojourneth at Corinth, elect, sanctified by the will of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, GRACE and peace from the almighty God, by Jesus Christ, be multiplied unto you.”— After this apostolical address, he exhorts them to “ Look stedfastly unto the blood of Christ, and see how precious his blood is in the sight of God ; which being shed for our salvation, hath obtained the GRACE of REPENTANCE for all the world *.”

Speaking of the Israelites, he observes, “ They were all therefore greatly honoured, not for their own sakes, nor for their own works, nor for the righteousness which they themselves wrought ; but through his will. And we also being called by the same will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, neither by our own wisdom, prudence, or piety, nor by the works which we have done in holiness of heart : but by that faith by which the almighty God hath justified all men from the beginning † :” i. e. all who have been justified.

“ This is the way, beloved in which we may find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the high priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our weaknesses. By him are the eyes of our hearts *opened*, by him our foolish and darkened understanding SPRING-ETH UP into his wonderful LIGHT.”

The epistle concludes thus :

* See. 7.

† See. 12.

See. 21.

“ The GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, and with all that are any where *called* by God through him : to whom be honour and glory, might and majesty, and eternal dominion, by him [Jesus Christ] from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.



ST. BARNABAS.

There is also an epistle ascribed to the apostle Barnabas. It is, indeed, difficult to receive an apostolical epistle, without receiving it as inspired ; and there are some passages in this, which seem to forbid the idea ; nor was it ever received as a part of the New Testament. Its high antiquity is, however, certain ; and, if not the work of the apostle, it must have been written near his time, from the quotations found of it in the ancient fathers.

From this epistle I shall only cite two short extracts.

“ Before that we believed in God, the habitation of our heart was - - - a house full of idolatry, a house of devils, inasmuch as whatever was contrary to God was done therein : - - - but having obtained remission of our sins, and trusting in the name of the Lord, we are become RENEVED, being CREATED AGAIN, as it were from the beginning. Wherefore God truly dwells in our house, that is, in us. - - -

R

This

This is that spiritual temple which is built unto the Lord *."

"Thou shalt not be bitter in thy commands unto thy servants, lest thou fear not that God, who is master both of you and them: for he came not to call any with respect of persons; but those whom the SPIRIT HAD PREPARED †."

ST. I G N A T I U S.

Martyred A. D. 107.

Ignatius, surnamed THEOPHORUS, one of the apostolic fathers, was a disciple of the apostle John, who is said to have ordained him bishop of Antioch before the year 67, where he remained about forty years, at the end of which he was accused and condemned for his faith in Christ, and boldness in confessing it.

Being brought into the presence of *Trajan*, the Roman emperor, himself interrogated him—"What a very devil art thou (said he) thus to set thyself to transgress our commands, and to persuade others to do the same to their own destruction?"

Ignatius answered—"No one ought to call THEOPHORUS *devil*, forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed far from the servants of God. But if be-

* Sect 16

† Sect 17.

cause I am hostile to those evil spirits, you call me wicked with respect to them, I confess the charge; for having Christ the heavenly king within me, I dissolve all their snares.

Traj. And who is THEOPHORUS?

Ignatius. He who has Christ in his bosom.

Traj. Do not we then appear to have the gods in our bosoms, who fight for us against our enemies?

Ign. You mistake in calling the evil spirits of the heathen gods. For there is but *one* God who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them: and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom may I enjoy!

Traj. His kingdom, you say, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?

Ign. His who crucified my sin, together with its author; and has put all the deceit and malice of the devil, under the feet of those who carry him in their heart.

Traj. Dost thou then carry him who was crucified with thee?

Ign. I do: for it is written, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them."

Traj. Irritated by a fortitude and heroism, which in any other cause he would have admired, pronounced the sentence—"Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed that he carries within himself him that was crucified, I command that he be carried, bound by soldiers, to

the great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts for the entertainment of the people."

To reconcile this sentence, and the rest of Trajan's conduct towards the Christians, with his acknowledged character for justice and moderation, is not my department: but the fact furnishes a striking proof that something more than good dispositions and moral suasion is necessary to form the christian; and that they do not even prepare the mind for conversion, as many have pretended. Here is a prince of excellent disposition and character—there a preacher of apostolic manners and simplicity—but is Trajan therefore converted?—No; that magnanimity which christianity so eminently inspires, enrages him, instead of attracting his admiration and applause.

Ignatius supported his christian heroism to the end, and perhaps thirsted too much for martyrdom.—“When the holy martyr heard this sentence (say the relators of his sufferings) he exclaimed with joy, “I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love toward thee; and hast caused me to be put into iron bonds with thy apostle Paul.”—Upon this he was sent to Rome, according to his sentence: on the passage, however, he found an opportunity to write and forward a letter to the church there, to prepare them to acquiesce in his sufferings, and assist him with their prayers.

This epistle is directed to them who are “beloved and ILLUMINATED through the will . . . and fil-

led with the GRACE of God." To them he says, "Pray for me, that God would give me both *inward* and outward strength; that I may not only be called a christian, but be found one."

Speaking of his approaching martyrdom, he says, "Now I begin to be a disciple: nor shall any thing visible or invisible move me, so that I may but attain to Christ Jesus. Let fire and the cross; let the companies of wild beasts; let breaking of bones, and tearing of limbs; let the grinding to pieces of the whole frame, and all the cruel torments of the devil come upon me; only let me enjoy Jesus Christ *."

ST. P O L Y C A R P.

Martyred A. D. 167 †.

About the time of the death of Ignatius, POLYCARP, bishop of Smyrna, supposed to be the same referred to by St. John ‡, wrote an epistle to the church of the *Philippians*, which, as some other primitive epistolary writings, was occasionally read publicly in the churches.

* See p. 2.

† *Antient History*, and *Epistolæ Polycarpi*, p. 120. Polycarp's death is placed by Eusebius in the year 167; but I have followed the common account only Mr. Moser.

‡ Revelation.

He begins this epistle in the true spirit of a martyr, by calling the bonds of the saints “the *diadems* * (or *ornamental bracelets*, as some chuse to render the word) of such as are truly chosen by God and our Lord.” The chief thing that merits our attention in this epistle, is the truly christian manner in which he speaks of the presbyter *Valens*, who had separated from the church, and erred from the faith. “I am (says he) exceedingly sorry both for him, and for his wife; to whom may God grant *true repentance*: Be ye also moderate on this occasion; and look not upon them as enemies, but call them back as suffering and erring members, that ye may save your whole body †.”—How different this from the conduct of the Church to heretics in the following ages!

Near the close of this epistle he adds—“Now the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he himself, our everlasting High-priest, the Son of God, even Jesus Christ *build you up* in faith and in truth, and in all meekness and lenity, in patience and long-suffering, in forbearance and chastity: and grant unto you a lot and portion among his saints ‡.”

When this good man was taken before the proconsul, he was persuaded to reproach Christ, and save his life; but he nobly replied, “Lighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never wronged

* *Διαδήματα*

† Polyc. ad Phil. Sect. xi.

‡ Sect. xii.

me, how then can I blaspheme my King and Saviour ?”

When this martyr was brought to the stake, they offered, as usual, to nail him to it ; but he said, “ Let me alone as I am : for he who has given me strength to come to the fire, will also enable me to stand unmoved in the pile, without your securing me by nails.”

Part of his last prayer, at his death, was as follows —“ O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thyself, the God of angels and principalities, and of every creature, and especially of all the just who live in thy presence ! I bless thee, that thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of thy martyrs : wherefore, I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal and celestial High-priest Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son ; through whom, with him, in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee, both now and for ever. Amen *”

* Martyr Polyc. *Scilicet* xiv.

J U S T I N M A R T Y R.

Martyred about A. D. 165.

This *Justin* was a native of Neapolis, in Palestine, the son of Priscus, and grandson of Bacchius, a Grecian by birth and religion. At an early age he commenced philosopher, and was successively pupil to a Stoic, a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean, and a Platonist. At length, wearied with the vanity of these studies, and much affected with the sufferings and constancy of the Christians, he began to think favourably of them; and, in this situation of mind, he retired into a solitary place near the sea. Here he providentially met with a venerable old man, who, entering into conversation with him, spoke lightly of Pythagoras and Plato, and assured him that there was no true science among the philosophers, who neither knew God, nor were AIDED by the HOLY SPIRIT. He also reasoned of the immortality of the soul, the reward of the righteous, and punishment of the wicked. Justin, being convinced by his reasonings, enquired by what means he might farther attain the true knowledge of God. The aged father referred him to the prophets, who were both more ancient, and better men than the philosophers; and who, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, had foretold things to come, by the accomplishment of which, particularly with respect

to

to the Messiah, their authority was established. "But then, above all things (added he) pray that the *gate of light* may be opened unto thee; for these things can *only* be attained by those to whom God and his Christ *give understanding* *."

From this conversation Justin became a zealous christian; and wrote, besides his work against Marcion, and Dialogue with Trypho, two excellent Apologies for our religion, and in the end, sealed the truth of it with his blood.

The learned GALE charges him with leaning too much to the system since adopted by Pelagius, and it is generally admitted, he strongly tinged Christianity with Platonism †. There are, however, several passages in his writings which shew his sentiments to have been sufficiently orthodox in the great leading truths of christianity; and that he possessed (as Mr. Milner observes) "the clearest views of that *special illumination*, without which no man will understand and relish real godliness."

That he acknowledged the doctrine of original sin, sufficiently appears from the following passages:—He says that Jesus Christ "submitted to be born and crucified . . . on account of the human race, who, through Adam, fell under subjection to death, and the deceit of the serpent, *besides* the evil charge-

* Dial. cum Tryph.

† Cont. of the Gentiles, Vol. II. p. 111.

able to every one on his own account*.” And, when he tells us that “Christ had no need of circumcision, because by the will of the Father HE was born *without* sin †,” it is strongly implied, that he believed the rest of mankind born *in* it. Agreeable to this depraved state of human nature he tells us, that the holy scriptures are only to be understood “by a mighty grace derived from God ‡.”

In another of his works he compares and distinguishes between our first and second (i. e. our natural and spiritual) birth in this manner:—“Though we have no choice (says he) in our creation, yet in our regeneration we have; for God persuades only, and draws us gently in our regeneration, by co-operating freely with those rational powers he has bestowed upon us §.”

I R E N Æ U S.

Born A. D. 17. Martyred 203, or 213.

This celebrated Father was a Greek by birth, and probably born of christian parents. He was early instructed in philosophy and human learning. In religion he was sincerely the disciple of Papias and

* De Cons. Tryph.

† Ib.

‡ Ib.

§ De Cons. Tr.

Polycarp, and sent by the latter to preach the gospel in Gaul. After being several years a presbyter of the church of Lyons, he was at length ordained its bishop; and, in the end, there sacrificed to the cruel demon of Pagan superstition, in one of the above periods, when every species of cruelty was exercised upon the poor devoted christians, and the streets of Lyon repeatedly flowed with the innocent blood of christians.

Irenæus, as well as Justin, was tinctured with Pelagian notions on the subjects of predestination and free-will; on other points, however, he was a great champion of orthodoxy, and his five books against herenes (still preserved in a Latin translation) are considered as some of the most precious remains of antiquity, and from these I shall subjoin a few short extracts.

Speaking of our first progenitor, he says—"In Adam we lost the image of God, were overcome by disobedience, and made subject to sin*." And in another place—"The human race were smitten in the first Adam, in whom it had transgressed †."

In another part of his work, speaking of the barbarous nations who had received christianity; but had not sufficient knowledge to peruse and understand the scriptures. He observes, that "they believe in Christ Jesus without paper and ink, having the doctrine of salvation *written on their hearts* by the

* *Adv. Hæres.* lib. ii. c. 1. §. 1.

† *Ibid.* lib. v. cap. 34.

Holy Spirit; and faithfully keeping up to ancient tradition concerning one God the Creator, and his Son Jesus Christ. Those who have received this faith without scripture, are barbarians, as to their manner of speaking, compared with us; but as to their sentiments and behaviour, they are very wise, and very agreeable to God, persevering in the practice of justice and charity *."

We have already mentioned the persecutions at Lyons. An epistle containing a particular account of the principal sufferers, was written in the name of the neighbouring churches of Lyons and Vienne, to the brethren in Asia and Phrygia. As this is supposed to have been drawn up by Irenæus, I shall here introduce a short extract of it from Mr. *Milner*, who translates from Eusebius †. Among the most celebrated of these martyrs was SANCTUS, whose treatment was the most shocking and inhuman that can be conceived. Still, however, (says the epistle) he remained "firm in his confession, being bedewed and refreshed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from the belly ‡ of Christ. His body witnessed indeed the ghastly tortures which he had sustained, being one continued wound and bruise, altogether contracted, and no longer retaining the form of a human creature; in whom Christ suffering wrought great marvels, confounding the adversary,

* Act. II. vi. 13. comp. † Euseb. H. E. lib. v. c. p. 1.

‡ Gen. ix. 12. comp. § S. Hieron. c. 1. p. 10.

and shewing for the encouragement of the rest, that nothing is to be feared where the love of the Father is—nothing painful where the glory of Christ is exhibited.” Among the other martyrs most distinguished by their zeal and constancy were *Blondina* (who seems to have emulated the Mother of the Maccabees *) *Maturus*, and *Attalus*. It must be supposed that at first many were persuaded to deny Christ, but most of these were recovered by the constancy of the faithful. “A small number (says the writer) still remained in apostacy, but they were those who possessed not the *least spark* of divine faith, or had the least acquaintance with the riches of Christ in their souls, and had no fear of God before their eyes.”



CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

Died A. D. 215.

This Clement was educated in the stoic philosophy at Alexandria, where he imbibed many errors of that sect, which he afterward intermingled with the christian system, and in great measure laid the foundation of Pelagianism.

Notwithstanding this, he had the happiness at sometimes to stumble on the truth, at the expense of his

* 2 Ma c. vii.

consistency, as many other good men do. Though he contends, that "faith is in our own power *," he also maintains, (inconsistent as these propositions are) the necessity of "*efficacious grace* for the production of all moral good : †" and talks of the "*infusion* of faith by God ‡," which he calls "a divine thing §."

This father is celebrated for his learning and eloquence, which he commendably employed in defence of Christianity.

Le Clerc de Septchenis, "Of the religion of the antient Greeks," quotes the following remarkable passage, wherein he recommends Christianity in terms borrowed from the heathen oracles.—"O MYSTERIES truly sacred! O pure light! at the light of *torches* the *veil* that covers God and Heaven falls off. I am holy, now that I am *initiated*! It is the LORD himself who is the *Hierophant* ||. He sets his seal upon the *adept*, whom he ILLUMINATES with his beams; and whom, as a recompence for his faith, he will recommend to the eternal love of his Father. These are the *orgies* of *my mysteries*! come ye and be *received*."

This passage is much more curious and important than it may appear to some readers. Bishop Warbur-

* Strom. II.

† Strom. III.

‡ Strom. II.

§ *Θεία τι.*

|| The *Hierophant* was the chief officiating priest—the *Adept*, the party initiated—the *Torch* and the *Veil* in St. Clement, allude to the scenery of orgies, or religious rites.

ton says, "Antiquity [that is, pagan antiquity] considered *initiation* into the *mysteries* as a deliverance from a *living death* of vice, brutality, and misery, and the *beginning of a new life* of reason, virtue, and happiness *." To some readers it may be necessary to observe, that by the *mysteries*, are here meant certain ceremonies peculiar to paganism, consisting of rites partly emblematic, partly superstitious, and, in some cases, partly obscene. When any person desired to be *initiated* into these, he was directed to the performance of certain sacrifices and ablutions—instructed out of their sacred books, and then brought into the sanctuary. Their first scene was introduced by a profound darkness, which was interrupted by artificial lights, exhibiting images both splendid and shocking; and varied by intervals of darkness, intermixed with artificial thunder, lightning, voices, and lamentations, till the party was sufficiently terrified, and perhaps rendered insensible—then were they at once introduced to the full blaze of day, and to a most beautiful meadow, where they were allowed to dance and recreate themselves as a perfect contrast to the scene preceding; and as that seems intended to give an idea of *Tartarus*, this appears designed for a picture of *Elysium*. The secrets into which the initiated are supposed to have been instructed, were, 1st. The history and origin of the mysteries: 2. The moral design of the ceremonies, to which they apply the very word *regeneration*,

* Divine Legation, Vol. II. Bk. iv. § 4. Note.

so often used in the New Testament: and, 3. The doctrines of the Divine Unity, and the immortality of the soul—which were, however, more or less obscured with Pantheism and enthusiasm *.

C Y P R I A N.

Converted A. D. 246—Beheaded 260.

Dupin says, that “among all the authors of the three first centuries, there is no one more to be respected for his sanctity, his wisdom, and the beauty and solidity of his writings, than this bishop.” He was a man of rank and property, and a professor of eloquence at Carthage; where he was converted by the ministry of a presbyter of that church, and his subsequent growth in Christian knowledge, was rapid and extraordinary. He seems to have possessed a considerable share of Christian simplicity; and his charity was such, that he sold whole estates for the benefit of the poor.

The account of his conversion, as it is given by himself in his epistle to Donatus, is equally interesting in itself, and pertinent to our design; I shall,

* See, beside *Warburton* (as above) *Le Cœur's* Biblioth. Tom. III. p. 47, &c. or *Aplios's* Letters on the Prevalence of Christianity, p. 352, & seq.

therefore, need no apology for inserting part of it, as translated by Mr. *Miner* *.

“ While I lay (says he) in darkness and the night of paganism, and when I fluctuated uncertain and dubious with wandering steps in the sea of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harsh and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what divine grace had promised, that a man should be *born again*; and that, being animated with a love of regeneration, by a new life he should strip himself of what he was before, and though the body remained the same, he should in his mind become altogether a new creature. How can so great a change be possible, said I, that a man should suddenly, and at once, put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him? — — — — —

“ In all this I had a peculiar eye to my own case: I was myself entangled in many errors of my former life, from which I did not think it possible to be cleared. Whence I favoured my vices, and through despair of what was better, I cleaved to my own evils as vermicular. But after the filth of my former sins was washed off by the *laver of regeneration*, and *divine light infused itself from above* into my heart, now purified and cleansed; after through the *out-pouring* of the *Holy Spirit* from heaven, the *new-birth* had

* *Mem. Cyprian History*, Ch. vii.—xi.

made me a *new creature* indeed, immediately and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up, things once shut to be opened, dark things to shine forth; what before seemed difficult, now appeared feasible; and that was now evidently practicable, which had been deemed impossible: I acknowledged *that which was born after the flesh*, and had lived enslaved by wickedness, was of the earth; but the *new life*, now animated by the Holy Spirit, began to be of God. - - - - - Of God it is, of *God*, I say, even all that we can do; thence we live, thence we have strength, thence conceiving and assuming vigour, though as yet placed below, we know beforehand the vestiges of our future felicity."

Within little more than two years after his conversion, Cyprian was chosen first presbyter, and then bishop of the church of Carthage, the latter much against his own apparent inclination. This see he filled till his death, with great reputation and dignity. In the latter respect, indeed, he has been charged with going so far as to border, at least, on ecclesiastical tyranny. Mr. *Milner*, who speaks very highly of his piety, candour, and moderation, in general, yet confesses in some instances, and in the latter part of his life, he discovered "some degree of impatience"—that "the language he uses of the authority of bishops, would sound strange to our ears"—and that he supported "the dignity of the episcopal character in a stile

style of *great magnificence* * :”—in other words, he was much too arbitrary and assuming ; and it must also be confessed, he was not a little tinctured with the superstition and credulity of his age. These, however, were the blemishes of a great character, and serve but as foils to his abilities and virtues ; and the chief use of mentioning them may be to caution the reader, not to be too much offended with the same weaknesses in some more modern instances. Let it always be remembered, “ The best of men are but men at the best :” and that the church exhibits but one perfect example.

During the bloody persecution under Decius, Cyprian retired into a state of voluntary banishment, where, however, he did not neglect to advise and encourage the suffering Christians by his writings ; and immediately on its cessation, he returned to settle the affairs of his church, and re-collect his flock, who were now “ scattered as sheep without a shepherd.”

Sometime after this, a terrible pestilence broke out at Carthage, and the heathens were so much terrified, that they dared neither attend the sick, or bury the dead. Cyprian and his church had now an opportunity of exhibiting the benevolent and forgiving spirit of Christianity, which they did, greatly to their own honour, and the confusion of their enemies. Another dreadful calamity succeeded this : a party of barbarians made inroads into the empire, and took

* Church History, p. 114.

captive a number of Christian ministers and others; Cyprian again exerted himself, and from the poor afflicted church of Carthage, collected nearly 800*l.* sterling for their redemption.

In the reign of Valerian, persecution was again revived, and the Christians were rewarded for all their benevolence and charity, with banishment or death. Cyprian suffered with the spirit of a true confessor, obtained the crown of glory, and was enrolled among the martyrs.

NOVATIAN.

Flourished about A. D. 250.

Novatian was a presbyter of the church of Rome, "a man (says Mosheim) of uncommon learning and eloquence *:" He was originally a Pagan philosopher, but converted to Christianity, and chiefly memorable for the schism he formed in the Christian church; from which he is supposed to have been the first *orthodox* dissenter, no imputation being cast either on his life or principles, by his antagonists. His pretence for separation was the laxness of discipline in the Christian church; which, if it was culpable, his opposite severity was certainly not less so,

* *Mosheim*, Vol. I. Ch. 5.

in refusing to receive into his communion returning apostates, however penitent; and counting second marriages as adultery.

Though this man excluded himself from the pale of the Catholic church, (so called) on earth, there seems the most satisfactory reason to conclude, that he was a member of the true “church of the first-born in heaven;” and as he sealed his sincerity in death, there is no doubt but he wears a martyr’s crown in glory.

His treatise on the Trinity, according to the Athanasian scheme, is allowed to be one of the most regular and correct among the ancients: and “under the article of the Holy Ghost, (says Mr. *Milner**) he speaks very distinctly of him as the *Author of regeneration*, the Pledge of the promised inheritance, and, as it were, the hand-writing of eternal salvation; who makes us the temple of God and his house, who intercedes for us *with groanings which cannot be uttered*, acting as our advocate and defender, dwelling in our bodies, and *sanctifying* them for immortality. He it is who fights against the flesh, hence the flesh fights against the Spirit:—and he goes on in the best manner to speak of his holy and blessed operations in the faithful.”

Mr. *Milner* adds, (and I adopt the remark as equally pertinent to my purpose, as to his) —“The reader will pardon this digression, if it be a digression,

* *Milner's Church Hist.* Vol. I. p. 100.

to shew that the Spirit of God was not limited to one denomination, and to pave the way for that liberal and candid construction of characters, which it will behove us to cultivate in the future scenes of this history, while we trace the kingdom of God through a multiplicity of names, and divisions of men."

BASIL THE GREAT.

Born A. D. 329. Died 378 or 9.

This Basil is commonly called the Great, to distinguish him from some other Fathers of the same name; nor was the epithet unmerited, if zeal, piety, and eloquence can deserve it.

This Father was the offspring of noble and wealthy parents; but if honour can come by birth, he derived more from their virtues and piety, and the sufferings of his earlier ancestors, who had sustained the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and were some of them crowned with martyrdom; an honor to which our Basil himself was very near, as appears by the following narrative, taken from the eulogium of his friend and contemporary *Gregory Nazianzen*.

Valens, the Arian emperor, having attempted in vain by other means to make Basil a convert to his party, *Modeslus*, his præfect, ordered him to be brought before him, and after some previous conversation,

versation, threatened his non-compliance with the religion of the court, with confiscation, banishment, or death. "If you have any thing else to threaten me with (says Basil) do it; for all that you have yet said, not at all affects me."—"How so?" said the governor.—"Because (replied the bishop) that man is not exposed to persecutions, nor to the loss of goods, who has nothing to lose; unless you want this tattered, worn-out garment which I wear; or these few books, which are all my riches. As for banishment, I don't know what it is, who am not confined to any place, and have all the earth before me; or rather, know that all the earth belongs to God, and that I am a stranger and traveller upon it. What can torments do to me, who have hardly any body, and that almost without any flesh? As to the rest, death will be a favor to me; I shall by that be the more with God, for whom I live and fulfil my ministry. What do I say? the greatest part of me is already dead, and my soul has long since taken her flight towards God, as if she had broken her chains."

In the issue of this conversation, the governor was fairly conquered, and afterwards confessed to the emperor, that neither threats nor flatteries had any effect upon him. The emperor, being enraged, sentenced him to banishment; which punishment, however, he was afterwards induced by some providential circumstances, to remit, and our bishop died in peace with Stephen's last words in his mouth, "into thine hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

In his 13th Homily, he says—" *Regeneration*, as the word imports, is the beginning of a new life; therefore, he that begins a new life must put an end to the former. . . . The Lord, the giver of life, hath instituted *baptism*, a representation of both life and death: the water overflowing, as an image of death; the Spirit animating, as an earnest of life. Thus we see how the water and the Spirit are united. . . . The water exhibits an image of death, receiving the body as into a sepulchre: the *Spirit renews* the soul, and we rise from a death of sin into a newness of life. This is to be *born from above, of water and the Spirit* *."

This passage seems to determine the sense in which the ancients sometimes used the term *regeneration* for baptism, I mean *figuratively*. Not that they believed the new birth to consist *merely* in the outward rite; but, viewing the water as representative of the purifying effects of the Holy Spirit, they considered baptism as a *figurative regeneration*, and regeneration as a *spiritual baptism*. So in the other sacrament, we call the bread Christ's *body*; and, by a still stronger figure, we call the *cup* his blood. To which may be added, that in the primitive times the baptism of adults was sometimes attended with an extraordinary effusion of the Holy Spirit, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles, and among the Fathers (St. Cyprian for instance) which gave occasion to the confounding

* See John iii. 5. Eng. Mat. 3.

things perfectly distinct in themselves, though often united—the baptism of water and of the Holy Spirit.



CHRYSOSTOME.

Born about 354. Died A. D. 407.

St. John Chrysostome (or *Golden-mouth*, as that name signifies) was a Syrian, born of parents who had been previously converted to the Christian faith. His father held considerable rank in the army; but dying whilst he was in his cradle, left the care of him to his mother, a blooming widow of twenty. She devoted all her attention to his education, provided him with the ablest tutors, and in a short time he became one of the most learned, eloquent, and accomplished young men of his age. While he frequented the bar for business, and the theatre for amusement, he became acquainted with one *Pylæ* (an excellent man, but not the St. Paul above cited) who pressed home on his conscience the truth and purity of the Christian religion, with such effect, that he soon forsook both the bar and the theatre; and, forming a firmer acquaintance with Melitius, bishop of Antioch, after some years' probation, he was baptized and admitted into the church at 25, in which he

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took orders, and signalized himself as the first orator among all the Christian Fathers.

A writer, who always dipped his pen in gall when he wrote of bishops, gives him the following character,—“Chrysostome was an eloquent declaimer, a *four moralist*, a *patron of superstition*, and a *zealous patron of ecclesiastical power*. His fine talents, his solitary life, his generous distribution of the revenues of his see, his severe discipline among his clergy, and above all, his vehement and pointed sermons against vices of all kinds, especially those of the fair sex, raised him many enemies, at the head of whom was the empress *Eudoxia* *.”

The favourable side of this character may fairly be taken without any abatement, when we consider from whose pen it comes ; and as to the other, if Chrysostome was tinctured with superstition and clerical ambition, they are blemishes from which very few ecclesiastics were wholly exempt in *that* age, whatever may be the case at present.

The sentiments of this father are unquestionably in favour of the doctrine of divine influences ; though in some instances, he has been charged with leaning too much to the side of free-will.

Explaining the difference between the natural and spiritual man, as stated by St. Paul, he says—“A NATURAL man is he who lives in (or by) the flesh, and hath not his mind as yet *enlightened* by the Spirit ;

* *Religion's History of Baptism*, p. 255.

but only hath that innate* human understanding, with which the Creator hath endued the minds of all men." On the other hand, "the SPIRITUAL man is he who liveth by the Spirit, having his mind *enlightened* by him; having not only an innate human understanding; but farther a *spiritual* understanding graciously bestowed on him, with which the holy Spirit endues the minds of believers †."

AUGUSTINE.

Born A. D. 355. Died 430.

This Saint was a native of Tagaste, in Africa, his father, a soldier, named *Patricius*, his mother the pious *Monica*. It is necessary to observe, that his early life was strongly tainted with heresy and vice.—The pernicious errors of the Manichees, and the grossest vices to which youth are subject. This we learn from his own *confessions*, which may be considered as a diary of his experience, and from which the following account is extracted.

His crimes began in childhood with lying, and acts of petty thievery from his parents.—These were succeeded by dissipation and lewdness, in which he committed very criminal excesses: at the same time he

* *Original.*

† *Original in Ital.*

adores the restraining hand of God, which frequently checked his impetuosity in sin, and kept him from the fatal extremes, to which his own depravity would have urged him.

He particularly acknowledges that he had at that time, even from his infancy, very forcible convictions of the danger of his state, which sometimes compelled him to the performance of religious duties, and made him cry out earnestly for mercy, and make many resolutions of reform. This was particularly the case under a fit or sickness; but alas! (as is too often the case) his convictions wore off with his disease, and he gradually returned to his former course.

Another thing which Augustine particularly notices, is the providence of God, in leading him from place to place, and bringing him under the means of conversion, when nothing was farther from his thoughts.

A variety of circumstances led to this happy event. His mind had been long agitated with the most painful anxiety. He had prayed for chastity, but feared to lose his beloved sins. He prayed against his lusts, but he rather wished them satiated than extinguished.

In this state of mind he took up a book which contained St. Paul's Epistles, and accidentally opened upon the following passage—"Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make

no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*” Having read thus far he stopped, and immediately, as if a light from heaven had darted into his soul, his distresses fled, his doubts vanished, and peace took possession of his breast. Having closed the book, he ran to his friend *Alypius*, and related to him the circumstance. Upon this, it appeared that the same grace which had wrought thus powerfully on the one, had been secretly working on the other. *Alypius*, induced by this discovery, opened to him his own experience, and desiring to see the passage, read the following words with an application to himself—“Him that is weak in the faith receive.” Nothing, I believe, has such a powerful tendency to unite our heart, as an unexpected discovery of similar feelings and experience. The two friends doubled from this time their attachment. They went immediately to *Monica*, the pious mother of *Augustine*, who greatly rejoiced at the news, and joined with them in praising that God, “who is able to do for us, more than we can ask or think.”

At his conversion, he was about thirty years of age, soon after he addicted himself to the ministry, and was ordained bishop of Hippo. He was an acceptable preacher, but a more able writer, particularly against the *heresies*; and his works are considered as a treasure of orthodoxy, particularly on the controversies respecting *grace*.

* *Rom.* viii. 3, 4.

It is perfectly unnecessary to enlarge this article, with passages in favour of the doctrine of experimental religion: yet I subjoin the following, because it confirms the evidence already adduced, and justifies me in claiming the suffrages of all the preceding Fathers.

“We have shewed you” (says Augustine to the Pelagians) “by invincible authorities, that the holy bishops who lived before us, taught the same faith which we maintain, and overthrow the arguments which you make use of, not only in their discourses, but in their writings also. We have shewed you their opinions, which are very particular and clear. St. IRENEUS, St. CYPRIAN, RHETICUS, OLYMPIUS, St. HILARY, St. GREGORY, St. AMBROSE, St. BASIL, St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOME, &c. with all those who communicated with them, that is to say, the WHOLE CHURCH *.”

Farther to prove the justice of this assertion, and that it was not a mere flourish of Augustine's, St. JEROME, his contemporary, addresses him not as the *founder*, as some have since pretended he was, but as a principal *restorer* of the doctrines of grace—“Thou art famous through the world (says Jerom) the orthodox revere thee as the REBUILDER of the ANTIENT FAITH.”

Here this article would properly conclude, but that

* O. 17. p. 7. 8. 9. Hist. Protest. Vol. I. p. 124.

† Hist. p. 123.

a late writer has attacked the character of this witness in such a manner, that, if his charges were just, his suffrage could add little weight to any cause. “Augustine (says he) was a crafty irritated man, hemmed in, disappointed and toiled by able opponents. Passion for power was his ruling disposition, after his sensual appetites had spent their force in debauchery.”—In addition to this, we are told from M. *Petit* (a French physician, whose calumny had been pretty well forgotten) that he was a “*hard drinker* ;” and, if this were not enough, our author, in another work, styles him a “*bitter and bloody fanatic*.”—Then, as to learning, he is not only represented as a great dunce at school, which many a good scholar has been, but afterwards as a dealer in “scraps of learning ;” and that “he understood neither Greek nor Hebrew.”

To begin with his *drinking* : this is the only article on which proof is offered, and that proof is derived simply from his own words, in the following passage :—“*Drunkennes is far from me ; have mercy upon me, O Lord, that it may not come near me. The CRAPULA sometimes surprises thy servant, have mercy on me, that it may be far from me.*” This CRAPULA, it is said, and I have no desire to dispute or evade it, is the *head-ach* after drink-

* *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 217.

† *History of the Christian Church*, p. 120.

‡ *History of the Christian Church*, p. 120.

ing ;—but what does this prove ? That he was a confirmed drunkard ? Just the contrary ; for such persons soon conquer this weakness. I appeal to common observation, if persons unused to liquor, are not the most subject to this inconvenience. Give the words their utmost force then, and the evidence stands thus—Austin abhorred drunkenness—he could bear but little liquor, and if at any time the company of a friend, or bodily infirmity, induced him to take a glass of wine beyond his usual stint, he felt it the following day ; it disordered his head, and unfitted his mind for study or devotion. He therefore prays for prudence, that he may not only avoid inebriety itself, but the most distant approach—the smallest resemblance to it.—This is the evidence on which he is affirmed to be a hard drinker, which is just as conclusive as if, because a man was anxious to avoid every temptation and excitement to lewdness, we should infer him to be a *confirmed debauchee*.

As to the other charges, since no specific proof is offered, I suppose it will be judged quite sufficient to contrast the above character with that of two other writers of the first intelligence and respectability, and who can be under no suspicion of partiality—I mean Mr. *Gibbon* and Dr. *Larner*.

The former says—“ The youth of Augustine had been stained by many vices and errors, which he so ingenuously confesses ; but, *from the moment of his conversion to that of his death*, the manners of the bishop

shop of Hippo were PURE and AUSTERE; and the most conspicuous of his virtues, was ardent zeal against heretics of every denomination *.”—He adds, “According to the judgment of the most impartial critics, the superficial learning of Augustine was confined to the Latin language; and his style, though sometimes animated by the eloquence of passion, is uniformly clouded by false and affected rhetoric. But he possessed a *flexing*, *capacious*, and *argumentative* mind; he boldly founded the dark abiss of grace, predestination, the will, and original sin; and the rigid system of Christianity which he formed, or *restored*, has been entertained with public applaude, and secret reluctance, by the Latin church †.”

But Dr. Lardner, who was a still better judge, calls him “A wit of the first order, and a principal glory of the country of Africa;”—and “equal to Jerome, if not in learning, as few of the Fathers were; “yet in good sense.”—He also so far differs from Mr. Gibbon, and the critics he refers to, as to assert, he was “better acquainted with Greek than is commonly supposed §.”

* Dr. Lardner, *ed. of the Roman Empire*. 8vo. V. I. II. p. 12.

† *Ibid.* p. 23, 24.

‡ *Conf. of Aug.* V. I. VI. p. 32. See also *Ibid.*

§ *Ibid.* V. I. *Ep.* 120.

M A C A R I U S.

Flourished in the fourth Century.

This "Egyptian monk," according to Mosheim, "undoubtedly deserves the first rank among the practical writers of this time, as his works displayed (some few things excepted) the brightest and most lovely portraiture of sanctity and virtue *." The "few things" here accepted, according to *Michæne*, are certain tenets which "seem tinged" with "superstition" and "Origénism;" blemishes very excusable in writers of that age; and the more so as perhaps they were not altogether so erroneous as they may "*jeem*" to be.

The ingenious *Ludolf* had a high opinion of this writer, and has translated one of his Homilies † as a specimen of real and evangelical Christianity, from the close of which Homily I have borrowed the following extract.

Comparing the soul of a believer to a bride prepared for her husband, Macarius says, "She receiveth indeed the earnest of the Spirit in the divine gifts; let it be either the gift of healing, or of knowledge, or of illumination: [the extraordinary gifts of the primitive ages:] yet doth she never rest in all this, but

* Eccles. Hist. Cent. IV. Pt. 2.

† Reliq. Ludolphi.

goes on till she attain at last to the enjoyment of a perfect communion with God himself: that is, to such a love as is unchangeable and never-failing, and consequently, frees those from anxiety and trouble that obtain it." He compares the Christian also to "A child dressed up in the finest cloaths, and decked with the richest pearls and jewels of a wealthy father. Let this child (says he) be but hungry, and you'll see him not to make any account at all of all his fineries and ornaments; nay, nothing will satisfy him but the breast of the mother, supplying him with milk for his sustentation: just so it is with the spiritual gifts of God."

C H A P VIII.

TESTIMONIES OF THE LATTER FATHERS, AND
WRITERS OF THE MIDDLE AGES*.

IT is now well known, that the luminous portion of the starry heavens, denominated by astronomers the *Milky Way*, receives its peculiar lustre from the extraordinary number of stars by which it is illuminated: such are the first ages of Christianity. The church was then every where enlightened by the most brilliant characters, and appears eminently glorious: afterward the ecclesiastical horizon presents us with only here and there a twinkling luminary; but then, it must be confessed, they were more conspicuous, and some, which in the middle centuries shone as stars of the first magnitude, in the first or second would, perhaps, hardly have been noticed.



F U L G E N T I U S.

Born about A. D. 468. Died about 533.

Fulgentius was an African by birth, the child of noble parents, rendered more noble by their sufferings

* The chief writers of the middle ages, who have been referred to in the last, are Cassin, Baron, Lami, and Dupin. Each has a

for conscience sake, under Genfericus, king of the Vandals. Through his father's death he was early left to the care of his mother, who brought him up to learning and he entered upon a religious life. He appears to have suffered both from the barbarians and Arians—was an ornament to the clergy of his age, and left several tracts in which, *Dupin* says, he defended the principles of St. Augustine about original sin, the fall of man, predestination, and grace, against Faustus and the Semi-pelagians. He followed exactly the doctrine of St. Augustine and imitated his style.

B O E T I U S *.

Born A. D. 476. Died 525.

T. A. M. T. S. Boetius was descended of one of the noblest families in Rome, to which, however, he rendered much more honour by his virtue and abilities than he received from it. He studied eighteen years at Athens, and was deemed one of the most learned of his age. Upon his return to his native city, he was advanced to the principal dignities of the Empire, till he came to be sole consul. Neither his largeness, nor abilities could preserve him in such

* See General, Critical, and Historical Dictionary, collected from
 1. The Works of Boetius.

times ; but after a life chequered with various misfortunes, he fell a sacrifice to the unreasonable jealousies of the tyrant Theodoric, and died by the hands of the executioner in the prison at Pavia, whither he had long been banished for his virtues.

During his exile he composed his celebrated work "Of the Consolation of Philosophy," which has been singularly honoured in having been translated at distant periods, by our king Alfred the Great, and queen Elizabeth ; not to mention the lord viscount Preston, and others since.

The above work, which is composed in Latin, partly in poetry and partly in prose, is a dialogue between the author and Philosophy personified, in five books. The first contains the complaints of Boetius under his misfortunes. In book II. and III. Philosophy reminds him of his former prosperity ; and teaches him that the true happiness, the sovereign good, consists not in those temporal benefits which he had lost, but "in the enjoyment of God alone." Book IV. proves that none but good men are, or can be, truly happy ; and discourses farther of Providence and fate ; answering that perplexing query, Why the wicked seem to prosper ? The last book treats of chance, prescience, liberty, and how they are to be reconciled ; in which the author adopts and defends the doctrine of Christian and philosophical necessity.

The third book closes in the following manner :

"PHILOSOPHY. Seeing thou hast already learned to distinguish the true happiness from that which is
falsely

truly so called, it remains only to inform thee from what source the former is to be derived.

“BOETIUS. It is that for which I wait with so much anxiety.

“PHIL. But, as *Plato* says, in his *Timæus*, that even in the smallest concerns the DIVINE ASSISTANCE ought to be implored, what think you is proper to be done that we may be suitably prepared to discover the true source and seat of the sovereign good?

“BOET. I think we ought to invoke the Father and Governor of all things; for without such an invocation no work is well begun.

“PHIL. Thou hast said right.

“Then she chaunted forth the following divine oration.

“O thou that with perpetual reason
 Rul'st the world, great Maker of the heav'ns and earth,

 O Father, let our minds ascend on high,
 And view thy throne august! Let them behold
 The fountain of all good: and when we have
 Found the true light, may our mind's eyes on thee,
 The noblest object, be for ever fix'd.”

I would add, that though this work is on philosophy rather than religion, yet Boetius was a Christian philosopher, and there is no reason to question but his piety was as genuine as his philosophy.

ISIDORE OF SPAIN *.

Died A. D. 645.

I have passed over *Gregory*, commonly called the great pope of Rome, because though his testimony is remarkably clear and decisive in our favour, yet I deplore the artifices by which he raised his own importance, and that of the Roman see; and even excused him for his blasphemous oration in honour of *Arrian*, the regicide.

We come next then to *Isidorus*, bishop of Seville, in which see he succeeded his brother about A. D. 595, a scholar of the above *Gregory*; but a much better man, as I hope, than his master. He is commended for his learning (considering the darkness of the times) his eloquence, and above all, his charity; which seems however to have been indiscriminate and ostentatious, if it be true, as reported, that in his last six months it drew a crowd of beggars daily to his gate. However the following circumstance leads me to conclude that his intentions were good, and his actions uncountaminated with pharisaical principles. For it is related, that a little before his decease he caused himself to be carried to the church of *St. Vincent*, where he made the following excellent confession in the face of all the congregation.

* *Page*, &c.

“ O God,

“ O God, who knowest the hearts of men, and didst forgive the poor publican that stood afar off and smote his breast ; receive at this time my confession, and remove from thy sight the innumerable sins I have committed. Remember not, O Lord, the sins of my youth : and because thou hast said, that *at what time a sinner turneth from his evil ways, all his iniquities shall be forgotten* ; I am mindful of thy gracious promise ; I call unto thee with hope and confidence, although in respect of my sins, unworthy to look up to heaven : but O Lord, I beseech thee hear my prayer, and pardon me a sinner. For if *the heavens are not pure in thy sight*, much more am I impure, who have *drank in iniquity like water*.” After this, he begged forgiveness both of the clergy and people, if in any thing he had injured or offended them ; entreating the assistance of their prayers that he might obtain mercy of God, who confessed himself most unworthy of it.

Upon this he was carried home and died in peace three or four days afterward. The following sentence, though by no means new, comprises the whole of experimental religion in a few words.

“ The life of the body is the soul ; the life of the soul is God : and as the body without the soul is dead ; so is the soul without God *.”

* Sentences, cap. 31

B E D E *.

Born A. D. 672. Died 735.

The *venerable* Bede, as he is commonly called, was a native of this country, and born in the county of Durham; being early deprived of both his parents, his other friends procured him education in the monastery of St. Peter and St. Paul, and he became a Benedictine monk. He was not, however, one of those drones who feast upon the labours of the industrious bees. On the contrary, he laboured first to furnish himself for usefulness by study, and afterwards employed his talents in writing works that might be of utility to others. *Fuller* calls him "the profoundest scholar in that age, for Latin, Greek, Philosophy, History, Divinity, and the Mathematics;" and adds, that "homilies of his own making were read during his life-time in the British churches," an honour afforded to him alone.

Bede took a very active part in opposition to the free-will system of Pelagius, which he goes so far as to stile the *Pelagian plague*. It is well known that this celebrated Heresiarch maintained a power of indifference and self-determination in the human will; or that it is naturally as unabled to evil as it is to good, and capable of determining independent of the

* See *Church History and Pelagian Church Hist.*

influence of motives. Venerable Bede after stating this objection, replies that herein Pelagius “contradicts the prophet [Jeremiah] who humbly addressing himself to God, saith, “I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not his own: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” Nay Pelagius maketh himself greater than the apostle [Paul], who said, “with my mind I myself serve the law of God; but, with my flesh, the law of sin*.”

Bede was equally eminent in piety as in learning, and his works, which strongly favor of both, make eight considerable volumes. It is observable, that this good man kept to his beloved employment to the last, though aged and beset with infirmities, and rather than relaxed, doubled his diligence in death. For being engaged in a translation of St. John’s gospel, when he was just ready to expire, one of his disciples, who acted as his amanuensis, informed him, “My beloved master, there remains yet one sentence unwritten.” “Write it then quickly,” replied Bede, and “summoning all his spirits together, like the blaze of a candle going out (says Fuller) he ended it, and expired.”

An ecclesiastical historian observes, that “we have reason to believe that many of the old Britons and Scots were excellent persons; and that God, by their means, kept up true christianity in this island to a greater degree than it would otherwise have been pre-

* *Epistolæ ad Rom.*

served. Even Bede himself, (too partial to his own countrymen) represents Aidan, Finan, and Colanan, who were chief leaders of the Scots, and famous preachers in Northumberland, to have been eminent for their love of God, and their regular life, and great observers of the works of piety and chastity, which they learned out of the holy Scriptures. In a word, they stood up for the purity of christianity, as founded on the word of God, against the canons of the Roman councils *.”



A G O B A R D †.

Born about A. D. 780. Died 840.

This celebrated man was archbishop of Lyons, and distinguished himself by writing against the growing corruptions of the Roman church, particularly her idolatry.

Historians speak respectfully both of his piety and learning, considering the times, and from the list of his works in Bayle's Continuator, it appears he distinguished himself as the advocate of the most important truths of christianity.

In that list No. IV. contains his answer to the ob-

* *Tracts Relating to Christianity* Vol. II. p. 7.

† *Cont. Lat.*

Ations of Fredegise, &c. in which among other things he defends himself for “asserting that just men under the old law might be said to have been *Christians*, since they believed in Christ, and were *anointed with the invisible oil of his grace.*”

In No. IX. he discourses of the Trinity, Incarnation, Redemption, Union of Christ with the Church, the NECESSITY of GRACE in order to do well, and resist temptations, &c.



F L O R U S.

Flourished from 837 to 852.

Florus, fir-named *Magister*, was a deacon of the church of Lyons, and, about the last named date, published a defence of predestination, and the other doctrines connected with it, in answer to the celebrated Scotus.

For the following extract we are indebted to archbishop Usher p.—“Our Lord himself (says Florus) plainly shews that the very first commencement of what good we have is from himself: *We have not begun us; but I have chosen you* The Lord cherish his saints, not they him. God himself both begins and accomplishes what is good in

* See our Exposition of the of Genesis, ch. xxi.

believers,

believers. He first loves his saints, in order that they may love him. . . . Man has not of himself a will to that which is good ; neither has he of himself a power to perform a good work. Both one and the other are received from him, of whom the apostle saith, *It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* Through his mercy, he himself is beforehand with the will of man, as saith the Psalmist, *My God will prevent me with his goodness.* He himself inspires man with the grace of thinking rightly : according to that of the apostle : *Not that we are of ourselves sufficient to think any thing as of ourselves ; but our sufficiency is of God.**



GOTTESCHALUS*:

Died A. D. 870.

This good man was a Benedictine monk. About the middle of the ninth century, Hincmar, being made archbishop of Rheims, commenced against him a cruel prosecution, for believing predestination, election, and particular redemption ; and asserting in opposition to the doctrine of free-will, that “preventing and assisting grace is required to every good act ; which grace is not afforded according to human

* *M. Heilm's Eccles. Hist. Cent. IX. p. 2.* and *Tropady's Hist. Poet. merit.*”

merit." He was not only degraded and imprisoned, but repeatedly and most severely scourged, till, by dint of torture, he was compelled to throw one of his own books into the flames; but "no torments could induce him to deny with his mouth the grace which he loved with his heart." His life was however worn out by a tedious imprisonment of more than 20 years, and in 879 his spirit escaped to "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."



A L F R E D THE GREAT.*

Born A. D. 849. Crowned 872. Died 900.

As a warrior, a statesman, a legislator, and a king, this prince has no equal in the history of his own, or perhaps any country. As a scholar, he eclipsed all his contemporaries; and was the patron of learning and genius wherever he could find it. He caused many useful books to be written or translated, and circulated among his illiterate subjects; few of whom, in that age, even among the clergy, could either write or read.

Himself translated Bede's Ecclesiastical History, Boethius, David's Psalter, and other works; beside which, he wrote a manuel and some other tracts.

* See *Chron. and Hist. Coll.* Lives of Alfred

But it is as a man and a Christian, we are chiefly to consider him. And here his benevolence, charity, and devotion, rivalled his other excellencies, even in the camp and on the throne.

“When he was in the heat of his youth (says Sir *J. Spelman*) and the strength of his passions, he used to rise in the night, walk privately into the church, and pray to God that he would fortify him with his GRACE, against the irregular sollicitations of his passions. And, rather than run the risk of a libertine practice, he begged that some check might be put on his health, to secure his conduct.”

The same author adds—“As his devotion first shewed itself in his youth, so it constantly accompanied all the actions of his whole life.”—Yet “his practice of devotion was not after any austere renunciation, forsaking labour, and the conversation of men, instead of the enticements of the world; but was in a considerable regularity, not only good in itself, but profitable to all.”

The Bodleian library has preserved a very ancient Hebrew manuscript, in which are many of the sayings of this excellent monarch, translated from the Syriac; an extract from which I shall give, in the modernized language of Spelman.

“Thus, quoth *Salomon*, David’s comforter:

“O that you would now hear and long after your
 David!”

“He would hear you wisely;

—Thou

- " That you be good and true in this world,
 " And yet unite your souls to Christ.
 " Wile were the sayings of king Alfred.
 " I mildly admonish thee, my dear friend and be-
 loved,
 " Be'st thou poor or rich, that thou wholly dread
 " Thy Lord CHRIST, love him and delight in him ;
 " for he is
 " Lord of life ; he is one God above all goodness :
 " He is a bliss above all blessedness :
 " He is one man, a mild master : he is one common
 " Father,
 " And comfort of all people : he is so wise and rich a
 " king,
 " That he that in this world shall serve him,
 " Shall not fail ought of his will."

The above was originally Saxon verse : the following paragraph, in prose, appears to have been a part of Alfred's dying advice to his son Edward.

" Thus quoth *Alfred* : My dear son, set thee now beside me, and I will deliver thee true instruction. My son, I feel that my hour is coming. My countenance is wan. My days are almost done. We now must part. I shall to another world, and thou shalt be left alone in all my wealth. I pray thee (for thou art my dear child) thrive to be a father and a lord to thy people ; be thou the children's father, and the widow's friend ; comfort thou the poor, and shelter the weak ; and, with all thy might, right that which

is wrong. And son, govern thyself by law ; then shall the LORD love thee, and God, above all things, shall be thy reward ; call upon him to ADVISE thee in all thy need, and so he shall HELP thee, the better to compass that which thou wouldst.”

The university of Oxford, in gratitude to this prince, whom they consider as their founder, have within these few years published his will from the original manuscript, and I cannot forbear adding the following passages, as they exhibit him in the most extraordinary light in which a monarch can appear—namely, as anxiously interested in the liberty and happiness of his subjects. “ I do intreat (says he) in the name of God, that none of my kindred or heirs would abridge the freedom of those whom I have redeemed from servitude.” And again: “ But for the love of God, and the health of my own soul, it is my desire that they remain free and at their own disposal.”



ALPHAGE OR ELPHEGUS.*

Ordained bishop 980. Martyred 1012.

The darkness of these ages accumulated till it became, like the Egyptian—“ darkness which might be felt ;” which seems to have been in the tenth cen-

* Colyer's Eccl. Hist. Bk. II. From O'Brien and Novellon.

tury, characterized by Card. *Baronius* as the *leadens* age. There were indeed a few—very few—men of learning and piety, which shone as “lights in a dark place;” but such was the gloom which superstition and ignorance had spread around, that they were hardly able to render themselves visible, much less to illuminate the circumambient darkness.

Of the few names of this age preserved in history, I confess I most admire *Elphégus*, the martyr; or if not a martyr, at least a Christian of no mean rank. Though I expect no additional weight to my argument from this name, yet to prevent the chasm of a century I shall take the liberty to abridge his story.

This good man was, it is said, of noble extraction, and educated to learning; agreeable to the humour of the times he turned monk, and afterward formed a society of his own, of which he was of course made abbot; and gave an example of austerity, which his monks could not be persuaded to follow. He was however advanced to the see of Winchester, which he filled more than 20 years, and on the death of *Elfric* in 1006, succeeded him as archbishop of Canterbury. But in 1011, when the Danes laid siege to that city, where he resided, the principal inhabitants persuaded him to secure his retreat, as there was opportunity before the place was invested closely; but our bishop heroically refused. “God forbid (said he) that I should tarnish my character by so inglorious a conduct, and be afraid to go to heaven because a vio-

lent death may lay across the passage. - - - God be thanked, I am not conscious of any such behaviour, as to give the enemy any just occasion to use me ill. 'Tis true, I have converted several of the most considerable of them to Christianity: but if this be a fault in their opinion, I shall be happy in suffering for it. What then? Have I disobliged them by ransoming some of my countrymen, and by supporting those in their captivity whom I was in no condition to redeem? If they count this a crime, I shall be proud to be punished for it, though it were by a wound in every part of my body. But if you think the Danes are particularly enraged against me for reproving them for their immorality and injustice, I cannot help that; I am bound to these remonstrances by my commission, and unless I give a wicked man warning, his blood will be required at my hands. If this is all the provocation I have given them, I must needs think it very unbecoming my station, to desert my worthy countrymen in time of danger, and make an ignoble provision for myself. What can I be less than an hireling, if when I see the wolf ready to devour my sheep, I presently run away, and leave them to shift for themselves? It is therefore my resolution to stand the flock, and submit to the order of Providence."

He kept his word—the town was soon after taken by storm, and the inhabitants plundered and butchered with the usual barbarity of such enemies; inasmuch that the good bishop, as yet unattacked, could not
bear

bear to be a witness of such cruelties ; but ran into the midst of the barbarians, and, upbraiding their cowardice in slaughtering the defenceless, particularly women and children, offered his own life to satiate their fury. They immediately seized him, and, after seven months cruel imprisonment, offered him life and liberty on condition of his assisting them to plunder the church and country. But he rejected this offer with indignation ; and when some of his friends advised him to comply for self-preservation, he replied, “ Would you have me betray my trust, impoverish the church, and rob the indigent ? No : by the GRACE of God, I will never preserve myself by such prevarication.”—He was therefore inhumanly tortured, and afterwards murdered.



St. BERNARD.

Born A. D. 1091. Died A. D. 1170.

It seems to have been one of the prejudices of this age, that piety could hardly exist out of a cloyster ; here therefore must we seek for it, and here we find a *Bernard*, who, without recording the miracles told of his chastity and sanctity, was certainly a very pious man, allowing for the superstition and ignorance of the times.

But what shall we say to his encouraging the holy war?—We must say, that, like many other good men he had more zeal than knowledge, more devotion than prudence; and was perhaps an innocent tool to further the designs of the Roman pontiff; or, if we must admit that himself was tinged with ambition, and the lust of power, we must observe also that it was not uncommon among the clergy of *that* age.

Bernard was a considerable writer in his time, and though he was an advocate for many of the corruptions of popery, yet he opposed others, particularly in morals, with a zeal that does him honour.

About the year 1128 Bernard wrote his *Treatise of Grace and Freewill*, which was occasioned by the following circumstance. A certain person objected to him in conversation that he allowed *too much to grace*, because, in speaking of the graces which God had conferred upon him, he had said that God had prevented him in doing good, for that he owed to his divine grace all the progress which he had made therein. A by-stander replied, “What then have you done of yourself, and what reward can you expect when you confess that God has done all?” In reply to this he wrote the above mentioned treatise, wherein he follows the opinions of Augustine, asserting that “Free will is moved by grace, with which it co-operates in conformity voluntarily to its motions; that this consent is effected by grace; but that it is not his free, because it is without constraint and voluntary.”

“Where-

“Wherever there is consent (says he) there is a will; and where there is a will, there is freedom and liberty.” He cautions us also to be careful “when we feel good motions in us, not to attribute them to our will which is weak, but to the sole grace of God *.”

BISHOP *GROSTHEAD* †.

Died A. D. 1253.

Robert Grosted, Grosthead, or Grostesse, as his name is differently expressed, is suspected to have come into the world in a manner little to the honour of his parents; though it would be very ridiculous to consider it as any reproach to him. The defect of his birth, however, was abundantly counterbalanced by his personal merits, being a man of vigorous parts, good learning, great courage and magnanimity, and above all, of eminent piety. He was made bishop of Lincoln A. D. 1235, and during the eighteen years he filled that station, was engaged in repeated disputes with his prince, our king Henry III. and pope Innocent IV. for when our bishop was conscious of being right he rather valued who might be his opposer; but daring even in that superstitious age, to reprove his honours himself, and turn his bulls to pieces.

* *De vita.*

† See General History, *vol. 12*, p. 118. Hist. Pref.

His works are answerable to the greatness of his character. Bayle ascribes 200 different tracts to him on various subjects.

Speaking of freewill, he says, "EFFICACIOUS GRACE so works with the freedom of the will, that at first it prevails [i. e. goes before] the act of the will, and afterwards concurs; yet not so as if part were wrought by grace and part by freewill; but each in its kind works the whole. - - - *Aug. fine* illustrates this by a rider and his horse; by whom one and the same act is totally produced: so the action of God and the will concur totally *."

In another work he says—"GRACE is that good pleasure of God, whereby he willeth to give us that which we have not deserved, in order to our benefit, not to his. It is manifest, therefore, that all the good which is within us, whether it be natural or freely conferred afterwards, proceeds from the GRACE of God: for there is no good thing of which his will is not the author; and what he wills is done. He himself averts our will from evil, converts it to good, and causes it to persevere in that good †."

* De libero arbitrio.

† De grat. et justif.

ARCHBISHOP *BRADWARDINE* *.

Born about A. D. 1292. Died A. D. 1350.

This celebrated writer was born in Suffex and educated at Oxford. He made himself master of the philosophy and learning of those times, but chiefly applied himself to the mathematics and theology, in both which he distanced all his contemporaries. The close method of reasoning he acquired in the former of these sciences, he applied to the latter; and reasoned with an accuracy very uncommon in that age, and not much less so in the present. This, I suppose, procured him the character of the *profound* doctor.

Bradwardine was personal chaplain, or in the stile of that day, *confessor* to our king Edward III. and at times admonished him with great freedom and fidelity; and yet with so much modesty, that he often was successful in his reproofs.

His great work, and which has effectually immortalized his name, was entitled “*De causa Dei*,” or The Cause of God. This was a principal mean, next to the scriptures, to enlighten our great proto-reformer, *Wickliffe*, and the reader will not be displeased with the following short account of it from Mont. Dupin.

In this work he maintains very strenuously the

* See *Dupin*, Gen. Dict. art. *Wickliffe*, Hist. de France, &c.

principles of St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, with regard to the operation and power of God over the actions of his creatures ; and he treats not only of human freedom and predestination ; but likewise of the existence of God, his perfections, and attributes. He shews that God preserves all the beings he has created ; that his will is absolutely efficacious, insurmountable, and immutable ; and that every thing which he wills infallibly comes to pass. That the things which he knows are not the cause of his knowledge ; but that it is his will alone. He explains in what sense God *doth*, and *doth not*, will sin. He proves the NECESSITY of GRACE in opposition to *Pelagius*, and shews that it is gratuitous, and that we do not merit the first grace ; that it is the immediate cause of all good actions, and especially of repentance. He maintains absolute predestination. These are the principal points of his first book. The second is upon freewill, which he affirms not to consist in the power of willing, or not willing, the same thing ; but in the power of willing freely every thing it ought to will. He shews that no second cause can necessitate the will ; but that freewill cannot by its own power surmount any temptation without the *special assistance* of God ; which assistance is no other but his invincible will. That without this assistance we cannot avoid sin ; and that perseverance is an effect of grace. He explains, in the last place, the co-operation of the will of man with that of God."

C H A P IX.

TESTIMONY OF THE PIEDMONTESE, ALBIGENSES,
WALDENSES, AND OTHERS, IN THE DAWN OF
THE REFORMATION, BEFORE LUTHER.

FROM the testimony of individuals, we come now to that of a whole people, who resided during several centuries in the south of France and borders of Italy, where, like Israel in the land of Goshen, they enjoyed the pure light of the gospel, while Egyptian darkness reigned on every side.

I have called them *one* people, but it is proper to add some explanation: I call them one body in the same sense as our Dissenters of the three denominations are one body, namely, as Dissenters from the church of England: so they were one people *as Dissenters* from the church of Rome. The want of rightly stating this has occasioned unnecessary disputes, and some writers having found that they had unsound and heretical opinions among them, have charged them up on the whole: just as a certain right reverend prelate in the present age has accused the whole body of Dissenters of Arminian and other errors, when it is a fact, his lordship ought to have known, that the Calvinists still form a very great majority. So have

I do

I no doubt but the bulk of these people were orthodox ; or as one of their adversaries honestly confesses, " That they lived justly before men, believed all things well of God, and held all the articles of the creed, *only they* BLASPHEMED *the church and clergy of Rome* *."

The various names by which this people have been distinguished, were given them either from the parts where they chiefly flourished, from their principal leader, or from their profession of peculiar strictness and devotion. " Their first and proper name (says bishop *Newton*) seems to have been that of *Valenses*, or inhabitants of the valleys. . . . They were called *Albigenses* from *Albi*, a city in the southern parts of France, where also great numbers of them were situated. They were afterwards denominated *Valdenses*, or *Waldenses*, from *Peter Valdo*, or *Waldo*, a rich citizen of Lyons, and a considerable leader of the sect. From *Lyons* they were also called *Leonists* ; and *Cathari* [i. e. Puritans] from the professed purity of their life and doctrine †."

Historians have in vain attempted to trace their rise and origin. Even Popish authors allow them a very high antiquity, and Protestants have rationally conjectured, that this obscure and simple people kept themselves distinct and uncontaminated with Popish errors from the first ages of Christianity.

* *Relig. hist. con.* Waldenses, quoted by *Milner* on the churches of Piedmont, ch. xix.

† *Dissert. on the Proph.* Diss. xiv. part I.

The Albigenses were sometime under the protection of *Raymund*, count of Thoulouse, but he, being overpowered, surrendered them up to their enemies, who inflicted on them the utmost cruelties which Rome or Hell was capable of inventing. Even a *cryaie* was instituted against them, and more than a million of unhappy innocents were indiscriminately massacred, without regard to age or sex *.

A manuscript containing their principles, supposed to be of the 12th century, was given by sir S. Moreland to the university of Cambridge, entitled “The noble Lesson.” This tract asserts “that the first principles of those who desire to do good works is to honour God the Father, to implore the assistance of his glorious Son, and the Holy Ghost, who enlighten us in the true way. He saith that these Three are the Holy Trinity, full of all power, wisdom, and goodness. He bids us pray unto them for necessary assistance to overcome the world, the devil, and the flesh, to the end we may keep our bodies in the way of charity †.”

The same author says—“If a man loves those that desire to love God and Jesus Christ; if he will neither curse, nor swear, nor lie, nor whore, nor kill, nor deceive his neighbour, nor avenge himself of his enemies, they presently say he is a *heretic*; he deserves to be punished; and, by lies and forging, ways are

* *French Politics*, IV.

† *Quæst. de Hæres*, Hist. of the Christian Religion, p. 160.

found to take away from him what he has got by his lawful industry*.”

Another antient record gives the following beautiful picture of the simple manners of the Waldenses.

“ Their manner is—They, kneeling on their knees, or leaning against some bank or stay, do continue in their prayers with silence so long as a man may say thirty or forty Pater-nosters. . . . This they do every day with great reverence, being among themselves. . . . Before meat they say *Benedicite, Kyrie eleyson, Christe eleyson, Pater-noster* : . . . Then the elder of them says, in their own tongue . . . “ God which blessed the five barley loaves and two fishes, bless this table, and what is set upon it. . . . In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Amen.” Also after meat . . . “ Blessing and worship and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honour, virtue, and strength, to God alone for ever and ever. Amen. . . . The God which hath given us corporal feeding, grant us his spiritual life; and God be with us, and we always with him. Amen. Thus saying grace, they hold their hands upwards, looking up to heaven . . . and afterwards they teach and exhort among themselves †.”

In 1528 the Waldenses presented an account of their faith to *Uladislaus*, king of Hungary; in which they say, “ We believe and confess that Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three in person, but

* Quoted *for idem*, lb. p. 165.

† Quoted *for idem*, lb. p. 236.

one in the essence of Deity, is the producer of faith and and the giver of salvation. 'They assert that Jesus Christ, who "offered up himself unto death" for the church, is ever present with her "in a way of GRACE, efficacy and help, which are his free gift *."

In another confession of the same people, presented A. D. 1544 to Francis I. of France, they say, "We believe that we possess the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, proceeding from the Father and the Son, by whose inspiration we are enabled to pray; and by whose efficacy we are born again. He it is who worketh all good works in us; and by him we are led into all truth †."



JOHN WICKLIFFE ‡.

Born A. D. 1324. Died about A. D. 1384 or 5.

This great man has, with propriety, been called the Father of the English Reformation. He was born in Yorkshire and educated at Oxford, where he taught divinity with great reputation and success, till he was excluded for venturing to teach some opinions contrary to those of the oracle at Rome. He was however so ably supported and defended by John,

* Quoted by *Trübner*, H. L. P. of, vol. I. p. 155.

† Quoted by *Trübner*, l. c. p. 177.

‡ See *Eng. Phil. and Biogr. Dict.*

duke of Lancaster, and other great men, that his enemies, after many attempts, were unable to injure him, any otherwise than by vexatious citations and examinations; at last the papal thunder rolled, and Richard II. joining with the pope, they ventured to condemn his opinions as erroneous and heretical, and bitterly persecuted his followers; but in the midst of this confusion Wickliffe was safely translated to the skies, and left his infatuated enemies to wreak their vengeance on his back and bones. Wickliffe was a man of good sense and good learning for that age; very laborious in his studies, and wrote a great deal. His life was strict, even to austeriety, and he usually wore the garb of a pilgrim. His principles were much the same as have since been called *Calvinistic*, as will appear from the following citations.

“All that follow Christ, being justified by his righteousness, shall be saved as his offspring.”

“Except a Christian be united to Christ by GRACE, he hath not Christ the Saviour.”

“If God will GIVE me a teachable heart, a persevering constancy, and charity towards Christ, towards his church, and towards the members of the devil, who tear the church of Christ, so that I may rebuke them out of pure charity, how glorious a cause shall I have to die for !”

Besides Wickliffe's other works he made a translation of the Scriptures, the most useful work at that

* Quoted by Dr. Hile on the *Albigenses*, ch. xxix.

time is not thought proper for him to undertake; and it may be thought unnecessary to the curiosity of some readers to see a short specimen of the work, and of the state of the English language in the 14th century.

Math. vi. 25, 26 “In thilke tyme Jhesus answered and said, I knowleche to thee, Fadir, Lord of Hevene and of hevenis, for thou hast hid these thingis fro wise men and reys, and hast shewid hem to littil children. So Fadir,; for so it was plesynge to fore thee.”

It should be added, that about 40 years after his death, in consequence of a decree of the council of Constance, Wickliffe's bones were dug up and burnt, and his ashes scattered into a brook which conveyed them into the Avon; the Avon conveyed them to the Severn, and the Severn into the ocean: thus becoming (say his biographers) a striking emblem of his doctrine, which spread through many distant countries.



SIR JOHN OLDCASTLE*.

Martyred A. D. 1418.

The cause of Wickliffe, as we have just remarked, did not die with him; but, on the contrary, grew and spread, notwithstanding all its enemies. His disciples were called *Lollards*, and they soon became so numer-

* *Engl. Martyrs*, V. i. l.—*Brit. Dict. Sup.*

ous, that *Spelman* says—two men could hardly be found together, and one not a *Lollard*. Such was the rage of the priesthood, and the infatuation of our parliaments, that, about the close of the thirteenth century, obstinate heresy, as it was termed, was made capital, and *William Santre*, parish priest of St. Osith, in London, was the first who had the honour to be burnt for his religion in this kingdom.

Animals that have once tasted blood, generally become more ferocious: so it is with persecutors. The cruel priesthood thirsted for more and nobler prey. Sir John Oldcastle, baron Cobham, was at this time the great patron of the Lollards, and a nobleman of considerable wealth and influence, as well as of eminent virtues and piety. He, therefore, was marked out as the butt of their enmity; and to make their aim the surer, a treasonable plot was invented, and charged upon him, and he was condemned both as a heretic and a traitor. Before the day of his execution, he found means to escape from the Tower, and secreted himself in Wales for about four years; such is ecclesiastical vigilance, however, in these cases, he was apprehended, and according to his former resistance, suspended by the waist upon an iron chain, and thus cruelly burnt alive, amidst the execrations of his infernal tormentors.

The good Lord Cobham, as he was commonly called, made a bold and open confession of faith upon his trial; and, upon his condemnation, addressed the wicked

wicked archbishop, his judge, in these words: "Though you judge my body, which is but a wretched thing, yet I am sure you can do me no harm as to my soul . . . He who created it will, of his infinite mercy and promise, finally save it, I have no manner of doubt. As to the articles before rehearsed, I will stand to them to my very death, by the GRACE of my eternal God *."

DR. JOHN HUSS †.

Martyred A. D. 1415.

Dr. Huss was a member, and in 1409 chosen rector, of the university of Prague. His first light seems to have been derived from some of Wickliffe's books, which were carried into Bohemia by the attendants of Anne, queen of our Richard II. after the death of that prince. It does not appear, however, in point of doctrine, that he went so far into the principles of the reformation, as our English divine. The chief things Huss attacked at, in the church of Rome, were the superstition and corrupt morals of the clergy, and particularly of the pope, whom he would not allow to be representative of Jesus Christ; this was the most heinous offence at Rome, where the pope's supremacy was the fundamental article of faith.

* See Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 566.

† See

A council was summoned at Constance, in the year 1414, who have immortalized themselves in the annals of infamy, by decreeing, that "Lith is not to be kept with heretics"—accordingly, though Huss attended the council, under the safe-conduct of the emperor *Sigismund*, he was condemned to the stake, with as little regard to honour, truth, and justice, as to the precepts of Christianity.

An extract, from one of his letters preserved by Fox, will shew the spirit in which he acted and suffered. Addressing his divine Master, he says—"O most merciful Christ, draw us weak creatures after thee, for except thou shouldst draw us, we are not able to follow thee. Give us a strong spirit, that it may be ready, and that it may be willing; and although the flesh be feeble, yet let thy GRACE go before us, go with us, and follow us; for we can do nothing, and much less enter into the death for thy sake *."

Huss died in the genuine temper of martyrdom, singing in the flames; and happily experienced a literal fulfilment of that promise, "The redeemed of the Lord shall go to Zion with songs," &c.

* Fox, p. 579

JEROM OF PRAGUE *.

Martyred A. D. 1416.

"Jerom (says Mr. *Robinson*) was a far more considerable man than Huf. . . . His talents were more shining, he was a better scholar, and had much clearer notions of religion †." He was educated at Prague, but visited and received degrees at several universities. At Oxford, he found the works of Wickliffe, and drank pretty deep into his spirit and principles. On his return to Prague, he became the associate and co-adjutor of Huf; and, though neither monk nor ecclesiastic, became a preacher of reformation, and was esteemed the greatest orator of his time.

When Huf went to Constance, Jerom promised to follow him, in case of danger. He accordingly followed him privately, but, by the letters of Huf, and advice of his friends, finding he could be of no service, was persuaded to return, but prevented by the malicious vigilance of his enemies.

When brought before the council, instead of giving him a fair hearing and opportunity of self-defence, they emulated the cry of the Redeemer's murderers, and exclaimed on all sides, "*Keep with him, burn him, burn him!*"

* *Annals*, 1243.† *Library of Theology*, p. 213.

Alas ! the weakness of human nature ! After being twelve months immured in a loathsome prison, he was persuaded to recant ; but his fall was not permanent, nor long. When he was brought again before the council, he revoked his recantation, defended the characters of Wickliffe and Huss, and reprobated the corrupt manners of the clergy, with a force, that at once astonished and enraged his adversaries. He was accordingly condemned as a relapsed heretic, and to demonstrate their own spirit and temper, they dressed him in a paper cap, ornamented with flaming devils. “ Our Lord Jesus Christ (said the martyr) when he suffered death for me, a miserable sinner, wore upon his head a crown of thorns, and I, for his sake, will chearfully wear this cap.”

When bound to the stake, the executioner went behind him to kindle the fire, “ Come here, said Jerom, and kindle it before my eyes, for I had not come hither if I had been afraid of it.”

He died with great courage and magnanimity. His last words were, “ In these flames, O Christ, I offer up my soul to thee.”

As to the sentiments of Jerom, there can be no doubt of their harmony in the great truths of experimental piety ; I shall, therefore, not detain the reader with unnecessary quotations.

JOHN PICUS, PRINCE OF MIRANDULA*.

Born A. D. 1463. Died 1494.

The family of this nobleman derived their pedigree from Constantine the Great. Possessed of worldly honours, riches and personal charms, he was easily enticed in his early years into the gaieties of fashionable life. The Lord, however, having designed him for greater things than these, by a variety of trials weaned him from the present world; and excited him “to dedicate and devote himself to the glory of God and the good of his church;” and he resolved “for the time to come so to carry himself, THROUGH GOD’S ASSISTANCE, that his adversaries should have nothing to object against him.”

About three years before his death he retired from public life, to study the scriptures and divinity. His usual conversation was of the vanity and instability of mortal things, and the superior excellency of those things which are heavenly and divine; frequently exhorting his friends and acquaintances to love the Lord himself above all things.

It is said that such was his genius for learning languages, that he was master of two and twenty before he had been so many years. He is charged with having too much indulged his fancy in his theological speculations

* P. A. D. A. 1463 — C. 1494. P. 1494. C. 1494.

culations ; which may very possibly be true. But his writings had the honour to be condemned as heretical by pope Innocent VIII. which is no bad character in this age.



JEROM SAVONEROLA *.

Born A. D. 1452. Martyred 1498.

This good man was also nobly descended, and early distinguished himself for piety, eloquence, and learning.

He wrote many books in favour of “morals, piety, and the SPIRITUAL LIFE:” in particular he wrote a treatise called “The lamentation of the Spouse of Christ, against false Apostles ; or an Exhortation to the Faithful, that they would Pray unto the Lord for the Renovation of his Church.”

Dupin says, that his books “are full of GRACE, and maxims of piety ; he speaks freely against the vices, and teaches the most pure and exalted morality.” *Mosheim* places him among “the wisest and worthiest men” of his age.

He committed, however, the unpardonable sin, of censuring the corruptions of the church, the depravity of the clergy, and the usurpations of the pope, and

* See *Dupin's Hist. Eccl.*—*Care's Hist. Lit. Append.*

these cost him his life; but he conquered in death, and triumphed in the flames. Christ was his life, and death, therefore, infinite gain to him.

Though I have never seen any of this writer's works, I have accidentally met with a quotation in *Ludolf*, which, as it is both short and pertinent, I shall here insert—"In this our most unhappy age, (says he) faith so faileth, and supernatural illumination seemeth so nearly to be extinct, that nobody can tell whether that which he most confidently professes to believe, be not rather a notion into which he has been led by education, than that faith, which is the production of supernatural light, which is the proper faith of a Christian."



THOMAS A KEMPIS.

Born A. D. 1380. Died 1471.

We should close this chapter, which has consisted hitherto of illustrious dissenters from the church of Rome; with one of its most pious members. It may be thought strange, that men of piety should continue in such a church, corrupt as it was in the fifteenth century; but the fact gives us reason to hope; there are many excellent men concealed among the most

* See Biog. Lit.

depraved communities. Thus, when the prophet thought himself the only worshipper of Jehovah, in the land of Israel, the all-seeing Governor of the World had registered "Seven thousand names that had not bowed the knee to Baal."

This *Thomas* received his surname from a small village in the diocese of Cologne, where he was born. His parentage was mean, and circumstances narrow. At thirteen he began his studies, and at nineteen retired to a monastery of Augustine monks, whose habit and order he assumed about twenty-five, and continued with them to his death, in a very advanced age.

The famous book of "The Imitation of Jesus Christ," is commonly ascribed to him, and I am not acquainted with any sufficient reasons for depriving him of the honour; however, could it be proved to have been wrote by *Gerson*, or any other, it would be only changing the name prefixed to this Section.

Innumerable commendations have been bestowed on this book, not only by Bellarmine and the Popish writers, but by the most evangelical Protestants. *Bishop Horne* calls it "one of the best books extant on the spiritual life;" and says, "It hath administered instruction and consolation to thousands of devout Christians."—As this book is in almost every person's hands, a short extract will be sufficient.

"I desire not that consolation which taketh from

* *Confession of the Clergy of Norwich*, 1714.

me compunction for my sins; neither do I affect that contemplation which leads to haughtiness of mind. For all that is high is not holy; nor all that is sweet good; nor every pleasing desire pure; nor every thing dear to us acceptable to God. I therefore willingly receive that grace whereby I may ever become more humble, more diffident and more ready to renounce myself. He that is taught by the bestowment of divine grace and corrected by its withdrawment, will not dare attribute any thing good to himself, but rather acknowledge himself poor and naked. Give unto God that which is God's, and unto thyself ascribe that which is thine own: that is, give thanks to God for his grace, and acknowledge that nothing is to be attributed to thyself but sin, and the punishment due unto it *."

We have now brought our evidence down to the beginning of the Reformation, at which memorable era the second volume will commence. The present shall conclude with the following reflection.

Experiential religion is no novelty. It is the "good old way," in which trod both the Jewish and Christian fathers. Herein we walk with patriarchs—prophets—poets—martyrs—confessors—and reformers;—yea more—herein we "walk with God."—It is, then, the path of honour.

* De Imag. P. iii. cap. vi.

It is also the path of peace, happiness, and safety. Communion with God and with saints, constitutes the happiness of the blessed. To enjoy a portion of this on earth, is to receive the antepast of heaven; and is the fruit of that HOLY SPIRIT whereby we are sealed, and “which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



